

The Metaphor of the Divine as Planter of the People

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The Metaphor of the Divine as Planter of the People

Stinking Grapes or Pleasant Planting?

By

Jennifer Metten Pantoja



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For
Professor William M. Schniedewind

• • •

Support is to my right; on solid rock is the way of my footstep.

¹QS x1:4

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Preface

In the Hebrew Bible, the God of ancient Israel, YHWH, is almost always portrayed metaphorically. He is likened to a warrior, a king, a shepherd, a rock, a bride-groom, a husband, and a master gardener, to name just a few. This study examines the emergence of the conceptual metaphor YHWH IS THE PLANTER OF THE PEOPLE in order to demonstrate that biblical literature portrays the divine/human relationship as a reflection of the natural environment. Ancient Israel was an agrarian society in which the association between the land and the religion was intertwined. The aim of this study is to trace the emergence of this specific metaphorical discourse in ancient Hebrew poetry and follow its development throughout biblical history and Second Temple Judaism, in order to illustrate how the deep connection to the land shaped ancient thought and belief. Within this broader, primary metaphor, the complex metaphor YHWH IS THE VINTNER OF ISRAEL will also be analyzed as an image predominant in the pre-exilic prophetic literature. Viticulture became a powerful icon of the developing nation, providing rich imagery for eighth century prophetic concerns. Finally, this study will investigate how the metaphorical depiction of the people as plants was re-interpreted in exilic and Second Temple literature in response to the Babylonian campaigns in the early sixth century B.C.E., which forced many people out of the land. Recent advances in cognitive linguistics, coupled with traditional historical-critical methods, as well as a survey of the material culture, will illuminate one snapshot of ancient Israel's conception of the divine.

My interest in the interplay between metaphor and the Hebrew Bible was sparked in a graduate seminar led by Bill Schniedewind on the book of Exodus in 2010. While studying Exodus 15:17, the image of the divine as planter of the people led to an investigation of the biblical passages where God is described as “planting” the people. I noticed a connection between the nation of Israel and vine imagery, especially in the prophetic literature. The depiction of the nation as a vine is predominantly portrayed negatively in the text, whereas the metaphor of the people as plants conjures more hopeful images. The juxtaposition between the “stinking grapes” and the “pleasant planting” led to this in-depth study of planting/vine imagery in the Hebrew Bible and early Judaism.

Many people were involved in the final compilation of this manuscript. I want to especially thank my mentors at UCLA who read multiple versions of this work: Bill Schniedewind, Ra'anana Boustany, Arnold Band, and Yona Sabar. Under Bill's guidance, I learned how to think critically and actively engage

in ancient Near Eastern literature. Ra'anana taught me the fundamentals of scholarly writing, pushed me to be a forceful writer, and expanded my interests in Second Temple literature. Arnold Band's feedback was both insightful and thoughtful. He helped me to understand the fine line between finishing a project versus becoming engrossed in it. I took eight courses with Yona Sabar during my graduate career at UCLA. He instilled in me a deep love for Hebrew and Aramaic grammar and I was always at home in his classroom.

The Brill Publishing team also offered consistent support and patience as I worked through multiple drafts of the book. Liesbeth Hugenholtz was a gracious editor and I have learned so much about the publishing process from her expertise. I am also indebted to Paul Anderson and Yvonne Sherwood of the Biblical Interpretation Series, who encouraged this project in the first place. Finally, I would like to thank Roger Nam for his steadfast encouragement of my academic pursuits since 2004.

Behind the scenes, I have a truly remarkable support system. My spouse Benoni and our four children are my biggest fans and their love keeps me grounded. Many of the countless hours I spent researching and writing, were hours that could have been devoted to them. Benoni took care of the kids most Saturdays so I could write. His commitment to our family is what I truly admire about him the most. Last but not least, my parents, Drs. Shelley and Greg Metten, deserve recognition as my enduring lifeline. They willingly help out on a daily basis, feeding all of us, driving kids around, and listening to my every care and concern. Words cannot express how grateful I am for their dedication to my success and to my family's wellbeing. I am who I am in a large part because of this little village, and my life is enriched because of their support and devotion.

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Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by D.N. Freedman. 6 vols. New York, 1992
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
<i>AfO</i>	<i>Archiv für Orientforschung</i>
AJA	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
AJSL	<i>American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature</i>
ANET	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> . Edited by J.B. Pritchard. 3d ed. Princeton, 1969
Annu Rev Sociol	Annual Review of Sociology
AnSt	<i>Anatolian Studies</i>
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BAR	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
BibOr	Biblica et orientalia
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar. Altes Testament. Edited by M. Noth and H.W. Wolff
BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
BLS	Bible and Literature Series
BR	<i>Biblical Research</i>
BRev	<i>Bible Review</i>
BRLAJ	The Brill Reference Library of Ancient Judaism
BV	<i>Biblical Viewpoint</i>
BZ	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CALS	Cambridge Applied Linguistic Series
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CSCO	Corpus scriptorum christianorum orientalium. Edited by I.B. Chabot et al. Paris, 1903-
DBI	<i>Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation</i> . Edited by John Haralson Hayes. 2 vols. Nashville, 1999
DSD	<i>Dead Sea Discoveries</i>

EB	Economic Botany
<i>ErIsr</i>	<i>Eretz-Israel</i>
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
GH	Garden History
HdO	Handbuch der Orientalistik
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>IDS</i>	<i>In die Skriflig</i>
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>IMJ</i>	<i>Israel Museum Journal</i>
<i>JANER</i>	<i>Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions</i>
<i>JESHO</i>	<i>Journal of the Economic and Social Order of the Levant</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JLS</i>	<i>Journal of Literary Semantics</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
<i>JNSL</i>	<i>Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplemental Series
JSPSup	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha: Supplemental Series ¹
<i>JSSR</i>	<i>Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion</i>
MWA	Monographs in World Archaeology
NGC	New German Critique
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NTOA	Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus
OBO	Orbis biblicus et orientalis
OBT	Overtures to Biblical Theology
OCuT	Oxford Editions of Cuneiform Texts

1 James C. VanderKam, *The Pseudepigrapha and Early Biblical Interpretation*, ed. James H. Charlesworth and Craig A. Evans, *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha: Supplemental Series 14* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993).

OPS	Oxford Psychology Series
OTC	Old Testament Commentary
<i>OtSt</i>	<i>Oudtestamentische Studiën</i>
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTWSA	Ou-Testamentiese Werkgemeenskap in Suit-Afrika
<i>PEQ</i>	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
<i>Proof</i>	<i>Prooftexts: A Journal of Jewish Literary History</i>
<i>PWCJS</i>	<i>Proceeding of the World Congress of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>RevQ</i>	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
SBEC	Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity
SBLABS	Society of Biblical Literature Archaeology and Biblical Studies
SBLWAW	Society of Biblical Literature Writings from the Ancient World
<i>Semeia</i>	<i>Semeia</i>
SemeiaSt	Semeia Studies
SO	Symbolae Osloenses
SPHS	Scholars Press Homage Series
<i>STDJ</i>	<i>Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah</i>
SVTP	Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigraphica
<i>TA</i>	<i>Tel Aviv</i>
<i>Transeu</i>	<i>Transeuphratène</i>
<i>TZ</i>	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
UBL	Ugaritisch-biblische Literatur
<i>UF</i>	<i>Ugarit-Forschungen</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WBC	World Biblical Commentary
WCJS	World Congress of Jewish Studies
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZTK</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

Metaphor: A Channel for Divine Communication

1 Overview of Argument: God is a Reflection of the Natural Environment

Who is like you, O YHWH, among the gods?
Who is like you, majestic in holiness,
Awesome in splendor, doing wonders?¹

Exod 15:11

How did the ancient Israelites glean their understanding of the divine? How was the God of the Hebrew Bible characterized? Passages such as “The Song of the Sea” in Exodus 15 attempt to illuminate the distinct nature of the Israelite God, YHWH, as opposed to other gods within the ancient Near Eastern pantheon.² But what made this god distinct and how were these particular qualities conveyed? Was this divinity depicted in language exclusive to ancient Israel or were there commonalities shared with neighboring cultures?

The language used to describe the God of the Hebrew Bible has fascinated traditional exegetes and many of their interpretations have influenced modern conceptions of the divine. But, what if some of these explanations do not accurately reflect the depiction of the divine as it pertained to the ancient Israelites? This study examines the conceptual metaphor of the divine as the planter of the people in order to demonstrate that the biblical literature portrays the divine/human relationship as a reflection of the natural environment.

Theologians and scholars have long interpreted the God of the Hebrew Bible as multifaceted and complex. These complexities are not mere inventions of scholars, but have their roots in the texts themselves. In the book of Genesis, there are several occurrences of the divine represented with aspects of physicality similar to the human body.³ For example, in Genesis 2–3 God is portrayed

1 The NRSV translation of the Bible will be used unless otherwise indicated.

2 YHWH is the personal name for the Israelite God in the Hebrew Bible.

3 See Mark S. Smith, *Where the Gods Are: Spatial Dimensions of Anthropomorphism in the Biblical World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 14–18. For another recent study of divine anthropomorphism in the Hebrew Bible and the ancient Near East, see Esther J. Hamori, *“When Gods Were Men”: The Embodied God in Biblical and Near Eastern Literature* (BZAW 384; Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co., 2008).

as a gardener, walking among the first humans. These are the same humans who were made in “the image of God” and God’s breath infused life into them. The anthropomorphic elements of the divine such as the ability to walk, breathe, and speak are all qualities that humanity shares as well. According to the text, the Creator of the Universe and the first human creations shared a garden oasis and it was commonplace for the creator and the created to be seen together. God is physically present in this story and has the capability to move about freely, converse, and express emotion.⁴

The revelation at Sinai, however, delineates another dimension of the divine. Here, the divine voice bellowed from the thunder and lightening surrounding the mountain where the ancient Israelites were encamped. According to Exod 33:20, no one can see God and live, yet Moses may have seen his face (Exod 33:11) or possibly just his back (Exod 33:22–23). The text also specifies that Moses, after spending time with God on Mt. Sinai, was glowing from the radiance that emanated from the divine (Exod 34:29–35).

In the city of Jerusalem, the divine presence filled the temple and the Ark of the Covenant was his throne (1 Kgs 8:11). Yet in Ezekiel, the divine presence is depicted leaving the throne, the place where his feet rested (Ezek 10:18–19; 43:1–5). We are told that the prophet Isaiah saw God and was terrified that he was about to die because of the vision. Fortunately, one of the seraphs flew down, took burning coals from the altar, and purified Isaiah’s lips with the coal (Isa 6:1–7). Amos, however, mentions seeing God at the altar and this event did not seem to cause him dismay (Amos 9:1).

Even the name of God has baffled scholars because it could imply various connotations.⁵ Peter W. Macky, who wrote one of the first books on the importance of metaphor within the Hebrew Bible, notes that, “when God mentions that ‘I am what I am,’ he emphasizes his mystery and the human inability to grasp his nature intellectually.”⁶ The theologian, Gerhard von Rad, wrestled

4 Hamori distinguishes between several different types of anthropomorphic portrayals of the divine, which she calls a “spectrum.” Some of these anthropomorphic depictions include: concrete anthropomorphism, envisioned anthropomorphism, immanent anthropomorphism, transcendent anthropomorphism, and figurative anthropomorphism. See *ibid.*, 26–34.

5 See William H. Brownlee, “The Ineffable Name of God,” *BASOR* No. 226 (1977): 39–46. Also, William S. Schniedewind, “Calling God Names: An Inner-Biblical Approach to the Tetragrammaton,” *Scriptural Exegesis* (2009): 74–86. Raymond Abba, “The Divine Name Yahweh,” *JBL* 80 (1961): 320. Samuel R. Driver, *The Book of Exodus* (Anchor Bible; New York: Doubleday, 1999), 225.

6 Peter W. Macky, *The Centrality of Metaphors to Biblical Thought: A Method for Interpreting the Bible* (SBEC 19; Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1990), 188.

with the appropriate method to describe an, “invisible deity that transcends all human comprehension.”⁷ Exegetes, attempting to describe an “abstract” concept such as the divine, have thus faced a myriad of challenges.

Does the Hebrew Bible actually describe God as an abstract entity, invisible and incomprehensible to all human perception? I would argue to the contrary. The Hebrew Bible never mentions that God is invisible, so how can the divine be characterized as an abstract entity?⁸ The portrait of the divine as an abstract, unapproachable, and unknowable character is a product of Western theological thought.⁹ The Christian theologian, Augustine of Hippo, and various philosophers of the Middle Ages such as Maimonides, emphasized the “mysterious” or “abstract” nature of the divine and these interpretations have influenced modern notions of divinity. For example, a Christian theology developed around the time of Augustine that Griffen and Paulsen argue was, “primarily under the influence of Platonism, a non-anthropomorphic and incorporeal conception of God, that began to dominate all subsequent theology and philosophy.”¹⁰ Augustine wrote fifteen books on the trinity alone and in particular, on the nature of God. He truly desired to understand the divine, but I agree with James Dittes that the God that Augustine described is characterized by “remoteness, aloofness, absoluteness, impersonality, and unapproachability.”¹¹ These are not characteristics of the deity described in sections of Genesis and early Hebrew poetry.

Jewish philosophers also contributed to the portrayal of the divine as a transcendent and incomparable entity. Benjamin Sommer contends that, “for Maimonides and other medieval Jewish philosophers (starting with Saadia Gaon), the denial of God’s corporeality was a crucial aspect of monotheism.”¹²

7 Gerhard Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology: The Theology of Israel's Historical Traditions* (trans. D.M.G. Stalker; vol. 1; Great Britain: Hazell Watson & Viney Ltd, 1962), 214.

8 See Benjamin D. Sommer, *The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 104, for a detailed analysis of biblical evidence for God’s bodies.

9 See, for example, Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (trans. J.A. Baker; 2 vols.; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961). Walter Brueggeman, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Advocacy, Dispute* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997). Menahem Kasher, *Torah Shelemah*, 48 vols. (Jerusalem: Beit Torah Shelemah, 1979).

10 Carl W. Griffen and David L. Paulsen, “Augustine and The Corporeality of God,” *HTR* 95 (2002): 97.

11 James E. Dittes, “Continuities Between the Life and Thought of Augustine,” *JSSR* 5 (1965): 133.

12 Sommer, *Bodies of God*, 8.

Maimonides was concerned that a god who could be divided might be interpreted as polytheistic. Therefore, a dichotomy arose between anthropomorphic descriptions of the divine, which can be found in the Talmud and the Midrash, and later interpretations that insisted that the divine was transcendent.

Yochanan Muffs articulates the dichotomy that these exegetes struggled with quite eloquently:

The tension between the concept of transcendence, which insists the deity is not to be identified with the *physis* of the world, and radical personalism, which insists the deity is anthropomorphically involved in the world, is the very source of the creative dynamism of biblical anthropomorphism.¹³

It is precisely this tension that gives the God of the Hebrew Bible a vibrant persona, oscillating between human likeness and intangibility. The biblical text depicts the divine as anthropomorphically present and unbounded at the same time. However, is God's infiniteness a dimension of God himself or a product of the editorial traditions surrounding the composition of the Hebrew Bible?

Benjamin D. Sommer claims that not only does the Hebrew God have a corporeal body, but that he in fact has more than one body, in his seminal work *The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel*. Sommer illustrates instances of divine embodiment in the Hebrew Bible to show that, "God's person finds expression in more than one self, even as the underlying unit of the being called YHWH endures."¹⁴ Therefore, God can be in human form speaking with Abraham or embodied in a stone that Jacob slept on at Bethel. He labels this tradition the "fluidity model" and ties these occurrences to the Yahwist and Elohist editorial branches. Thus, the fluidity model acts as a bridge, enabling God to be both present and divine at the same time. God's unique qualities are not diminished in any way by being accessible. He can maintain his transcendence; yet establish human connection as well.

Mark S. Smith's study on divine anthropomorphism and spatial dimensions, finds fault with Sommer's theory that a deity could be physically present in multiple forms at the same moment. Smith maintains that, "although it is true that an audience and author would understand that God in various passages

13 Yochanan Muffs, *The Personhood of God: Biblical Theology, Human Faith and the Divine Image* (Woodstock: Jewish Lights, 2005), 56.

14 Sommer, *Bodies of God*, 124.

is hardly limited to this one representation, no single text describes two divine bodies or the same deity in two locations simultaneously.¹⁵ While I agree with Sommer that divine embodiment takes various forms in the biblical text and there is a fluidity between anthropomorphic images and other-worldly portrayals, I do not support the idea of a “fragmentation” of the divine. The biblical representation of the divine originally depicts a strain of anthropomorphisms, which are then gradually replaced by the housing of the deity in a semi-permanent central location, the temple in Jerusalem.¹⁶ God is never in two places at once in the biblical stories, yet he does manifest himself in different forms.

The dichotomy that Muffs emphasized, therefore, is a product of the Scriptures themselves.¹⁷ There are traces of the fluidity model in various places in the biblical books, but because major sections of the Hebrew Bible were edited by the Priestly and Deuteronomistic traditions, the fluidity model is harder to recognize. Therefore, Sommer separates the depictions of the divine into two categories: “one of the structures in question presents God as locatable, knowable, and usable. The other reckons the divine to be uncanny, *unheimlich*, in every sense of the words: unknowable, unhomely (i.e., unattachable to any home), dangerous.”¹⁸ Even though the priestly writers attempted to portray the divine at a concrete and fixed location, earlier depictions of this deity display temporary embodiment in various forms. Thus, the portrayal of YHWH in the biblical text as both physically present and transcendent reveals why metaphor became a dominant method for describing the divine.

The biblical writers understood the complexities associated with describing the divine, but more often than not, metaphor is their primary vehicle of expression. For example, the prophets were summoned to utter the very words of the LORD (דבר יהוה) to a wayward people, often detailing the emotive nature of “YHWH Most High.” Through metaphor, YHWH became intimately involved in the everyday, the fertility of the fields or the success of the vineyard. The

15 Smith, *Where the Gods Are*, 79.

16 The Priestly and Deuteronomistic traditions rejected the fluidity model and insisted that God himself is contained in the temple (P tradition) or God is in heaven and his symbol, i.e., his name (שמו) is in the temple (Dtr. Tradition). In this model, the divine cannot be manifested to individuals outside of a specific sacred location.

17 See, for example, G. Ernest Wright, “God Amidst His People: The Story of the Temple,” in *The Rule of God: Essays in Biblical Theology* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1960), 70 ff., for more information on Name Theology. Also, Sommer, *Bodies of God*, 62–68, for a comparison of the name of God as a symbol for placing ownership over a place.

18 Sommer, *Bodies of God*, 122.

conceptual world was readily understandable by the people, rather than a select few. According to E.K. Holt, “the Old Testament God is not a monolith but a many-sided crystal, and thus he can be a god that changes. He can be the prosecutor as well as the judge, the jealous husband as well as the forgiving father.”¹⁹ The many-sided crystal through which the divine is refracted is almost always depicted metaphorically in the biblical text. The casual reader often overlooks this fact.²⁰

Ancient Hebrew poetry best captures the earliest depictions and essential elements of YHWH and serves as a basis for the emergence of various metaphors throughout the biblical text. For example, the deity is portrayed metaphorically as a warrior, a storm-god, a shepherd, a planter, a rock, a fortress, a shield, and a creator in just three early biblical poems: Exodus 15, Deuteronomy 32 and 2 Samuel 22. Personifying metaphors for God such as shepherd, warrior, creator, and planter are challenged by metaphors taken from nature such as rock, shield, or fortress and even zoomorphic images such as a lion. Poetic language, and metaphor in particular, does not describe how things literally are, but rather what things are like. Therefore, with the help of metaphors, the biblical authors develop a complex interior personality for God, which oscillates between total confidence in his chosen people and utter dissatisfaction with the actions of these same people.²¹

The early songs and poems that can be found sprinkled throughout biblical literature are often a mirror of the natural world of the writers. According to the conceptual linguist Zoltán Kövecses, “most poetic language is based on conventional, ordinary conceptual metaphors.”²² He also notes that the physical world is a natural foundation for more abstract domains. Therefore, just as the “natural and physical environment shapes a language, primarily its vocabulary, in an obvious way; consequently, it will shape the metaphors as well.”²³ George Lakoff and Mark Turner, the leading two figures in conceptual metaphor stud-

19 Else K. Holt, “The Fountain of the Living Water and the Deceitful Brook: The Pool of Water Metaphors in the Book of Jeremiah (MT),” in *Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible* (ed. Pierre van Hecke; BETL 187; Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 104.

20 George B. Caird articulates this idea more fully in, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1980), 18.

21 See A.R.P. Diamond, “‘Polytheizing’ YHWH-Alone in Jeremiah’s Metaphorical Spaces,” in *Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible* (ed. Pierre van Hecke; BETL 187; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2005), 122.

22 Zoltán Kövecses, *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 44.

23 Ibid., 187.

ies, recognized that metaphor is frequently employed in everyday speech. They also noticed that poets are the ones who purposefully use this tool to “illuminate our experience, explore the consequences of our beliefs, challenge the way we think, and criticize our ideologies.”²⁴ Poetic metaphor allows a rare glimpse into the particular worldview of a society and can be a useful resource when studying poetry from ancient texts such as the Hebrew Bible.²⁵

Illustrations from the plant world are among the most common metaphorical fields utilized in biblical literature.²⁶ Horticultural imagery is used frequently because the progression of a seed to a blossoming plant is an ecological process associated with everyday knowledge, particularly in predominantly agrarian societies such as ancient Israel. Vivid imagery as well as specific metaphors were employed to not only illuminate a particular message, but also as a means to convey deeper theological concepts within the language of their own agrarian and pastoral environment.²⁷ Since the God of ancient Israel is almost always portrayed metaphorically, Walter Brueggeman rightly observed that, “he is continually and closely linked to the dailyness of Israel’s life.”²⁸ Metaphors drawn from daily life highlight the level of interconnection between agriculture and the divine/human relationship in the biblical world.

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- 24 George Lakoff and Mark Turner, *More Than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), xi.
 - 25 One of the main reasons Lakoff and Turner wrote their field guide to poetic metaphor was to show that poetic metaphor is powerful and should be included in the “domain of reason.” They argue that poets have a unique ability to use everyday thought and illuminate those thoughts through, “the extension, composition, and criticism of the basic metaphorical tools through which we comprehend much of reality” Lakoff and Turner, *More than Cool Reason*, 115. Much of the metaphorical poetry in the Bible is also drawn from these basic metaphorical tools. See Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (2nd ed.; New York: Basic Books, 2011), for an introduction to biblical poetry. Also, James L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), for an alternate approach to the study of biblical poetry.
 - 26 According to Meir Weiss, there are about 250 images of the plant world found in the biblical text. See Meir Weiss, *The Bible From Within: The Method of Total Interpretation* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1984), 135.
 - 27 See, for example, Eric A. Hermanson, “Recognizing Hebrew Metaphors: Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Biblical Translations,” *JNSL* 22 (1996): 67–78 and Pierre van Hecke, ed., *Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible* (BETL 187; Leuven: Peeters, 2005), for a more exhaustive introduction to metaphor in the Hebrew Bible and the vivid imagery employed.
 - 28 Walter Brueggeman, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in the Biblical Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 261.

2 The Scope of This Study: Metaphor as a Window into Ancient Thought

Philosophers' mistrust of metaphor as "ornamental" has been transformed by the emerging field of cognitive linguistics and has opened up new lines of inquiry for scholars from both scientific and religious specialties. Furthermore, scholars are presently more aware of the profuse use of metaphorical language in the biblical text. Northrop Frye argues in *The Great Code*, "that we have to consider the possibility that metaphor is, not an incidental ornament of Biblical language, but one of its controlling modes of thought."²⁹ If metaphor truly is one of the controlling modes of biblical thought, then the examination of the development of one particular metaphor throughout the biblical text should shed light on various aspects of ancient Israelite life and society. The goal of this study is to examine the diachronic development of one particular metaphor for the divine using advances in cognitive linguistics and traditional historical-critical methods as well as a survey of the material culture, to provide a snapshot of the ancient Israelites' conception of the divine.³⁰

This inquiry takes as its focus the image of YHWH as a master gardener, but even more specifically, the conceptual metaphor: YHWH IS THE PLANTER OF THE PEOPLE (See Table 1 for a list of references to YHWH as planter of the people in the Hebrew Bible, Pseudepigrapha, and Dead Sea Scrolls).³¹ The

29 Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982), 54.

30 Carol A. Newsom wrote an article, "A Maker of Metaphors: Ezekiel's Oracle Against Tyre," *Int* 38 (1984): 151–164, which analyzed Ezekiel's oracles against Tyre, using both a literary analysis as well as a traditional exegetical approach. She states on pg. 164 that, "while an analysis of the rhetoric of metaphor does not replace traditional historical-critical method, the study of literary technique and its effect on meaning can both challenge the results of those investigations and produce new insights into the material." The goal of this study is to examine one particular metaphor for the divine from a historical and literary perspective, as well as noting what is known about the material culture. I too believe that this approach can produce new insights into not only the origin of the divine planting metaphor, but also how this metaphor evolves throughout early Jewish history.

31 Small capital letters are used when referring to metaphorical concepts. In a conceptual metaphor, there are source domains (the conceptual domains from which the metaphorical expressions are drawn from) and target domains (the conceptual domains for whom these expressions are intended). See Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 4–8. For the purposes of this

depiction of YHWH as the planter of the people is a metaphorical concept that can be found throughout the biblical literature as well as the works of Second Temple Judaism. The emergence of this metaphor in ancient Hebrew poetry and its development throughout biblical history will facilitate the structuring of this study. Within this broader, primary metaphor, the complex metaphor: YHWH IS THE VINTNER OF ISRAEL will also be analyzed as an image predominant in the pre-exilic prophetic literature.³² This study will also examine how this particular metaphor was re-interpreted in post-exilic literature in response to the Babylonian exile in 586 B.C.E., which uprooted key portions of the population from the land for a period of time.³³ Some of the ideas exhibited in the post-exilic literature, re-surface in Jewish works such as the Pseudepigrapha and sectarian literature from Qumran. Images of divine planting imagery in these Second Temple texts, draw heavily on demarcating a specific “remnant” or “branch” of true followers, which is depicted to some extent in post-exilic texts as well.

study, YHWH's relationship with the people is the target domain and plant imagery is the source domain.

- 32 According to Ning Yu, “Cognitive semantics maintains that our minds are embodied in such a way that our conceptual systems draw largely upon the peculiarities of our bodies and the specifics of our physical and cultural environments ... Primary metaphors derive directly from our experience and very often from our common bodily experience and therefore are more likely to be universal, whereas complex metaphors are combinations of primary metaphors and cultural beliefs and assumptions and, for that reason, tend to be culture-specific.” Ning Yu, “Metaphor from Body and Culture,” in *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought* (ed. Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 247–248. For further information on these classifications, see Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr., *The Poetics of Mind: Figurative Thought, Language, and Understanding* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Also, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (2d ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).
- 33 586 B.C.E. is the generally accepted date for the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem. See Abraham Malamat, *Israel in Biblical Times* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1983), 243–247, for a discussion of the arguments surrounding this date.

TABLE 1 *Hebrew Bible and Second Temple references to the divine as planter/people as plants/vines*³⁴

Exod 15:17a	You brought them in and planted them on the mountain of your own possession.
Num 24:5–7a	How fair are your tents, O Jacob, your encampments, O Israel! Like palm-groves that stretch far away, like gardens beside a river, like aloes that YHWH has planted , like cedar trees beside the waters. Water shall flow from his buckets, and his seed shall have abundant water.
Deut 29:28	YHWH uprooted them from their land in anger, fury, and great wrath, and cast them into another land, as is now the case.
2Sam 7:10	And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more.
Isa 5:1b–7a	My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He dug it , cleared it of stones , and planted it with choice vines ; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; he expected it to yield grapes , but it yielded sour grapes ... I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed , and it shall be overgrown with briers and thorns ; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of YHWH of hosts is the house of Israel , and the people of Judah are his pleasant planting .
Isa 5:24	Therefore, as the tongue of fire devours the stubble and as dry grass sinks down in the flame, so their root will become rotten , and their blossom go up like dust ; for they have rejected the instruction of YHWH of hosts.

34 The planting references are listed according to the organization of the Hebrew Bible. Also, the references listed here are those where the nation of Israel is metaphorically depicted as a plant/vine or YHWH is associated with planting or viticulture. I do not include all the generic references to people as “plants.” For instance, in the Psalter the righteous are often compared to a plant (e.g. Pss 1:3). The Pseudepigrapha references are arranged according to James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publ. Group, 1985). The sectarian literature from Qumran follows the organization of Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J.C. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

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- Isa 25:6–7 On this mountain the YHWH of hosts **will make** for all peoples a feast of rich food, a **feast of well-aged wines**, of rich food with marrow, of **well-aged wines strained clear**. And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is spread over all nations; he will swallow up death forever.
- Isa 27:1–3, 6 On that day YHWH with his cruel and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will kill the dragon that is in the sea. On that day: A **pleasant vineyard**, sing about it! I, YHWH, am **its keeper**; every moment I **water** it. I **guard** it night and day so that no one can harm it. In days to come Jacob **shall take root**, Israel **shall blossom** and **put forth shoots**, and fill the whole world with **fruit**.
- Isa 37:31–32 The surviving **remnant** of the house of Judah shall again **take root** downward and **bear fruit** upward; for from Jerusalem a **remnant** shall go out, and from Mount Zion a band of survivors. The zeal of YHWH of hosts will do this.
- Isa 51:3 For YHWH will comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places, and will make her wilderness like **Eden**, her desert like the **garden of YHWH**; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of son.
- Isa 58:11 YHWH will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a **watered garden**, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail.
- Isa 60:20–21 Your sun shall no more go down, or your moon withdraw itself; for YHWH will be your everlasting light, and your days of mourning shall be ended. Your people shall all be righteous; they shall possess the land forever. They are the **shoot that I planted**, the work of my hands, so that I might be glorified.
- Isa 61:3 To provide for those who mourn in Zion-to give them a garland instead of ashes ... They will be called **oaks of righteousness, the planting of YHWH**, to display his glory.
- Jer 2:21 Yet **I planted** you as a **choice vine**, from the **purest stock**. How then did you turn degenerate and become a **wild vine**?
- Jer 12:2 You **plant** them, and they **take root**; they **grow** and **bring forth fruit**; you are near in their mouths yet far from their hearts.
- Jer 12:10 Many shepherds have destroyed **my vineyard**, they have trampled down my portion, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness.

TABLE 1 *Hebrew Bible and Second Temple references (cont.)*

Jer 12:14–15	Thus says YHWH concerning all my evil neighbors who touch the heritage that I have given my people Israel to inherit: I am about to pluck them up from their land, and I will pluck up the house of Judah from among them. And after I have plucked them up , I will again have compassion on them, and I will bring them again to their heritage and to their land, every one of them.
Jer 17:7–8	Blessed are those who trust in YHWH, whose trust is YHWH. They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit .
Jer 24:5–7	Thus says YHWH, the God of Israel: Like these good figs , so I will regard the exiles from Judah, whom I have sent away from this place to the land of the Chaldeans. I will set my eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them back to this land. I will build them up, and not tear them down; I will plant them, and not pluck them up. I will give them a heart to know that I am YHWH; and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart.
Jer 31:27–28	The days are surely coming, says YHWH, when I will sow the house of Israel and house of Judah with seed of humans and the seed of animals. And just as I have watched over them to pluck up and break down, to overthrow, destroy, and bring evil, so I will watch over them to build and to plant , says YHWH.
Jer 32:40–41	I will make an everlasting covenant with them, never to draw back from doing good to them; and I will put the fear of me in their hearts, so that they many not turn from me. I will rejoice in doing good to them, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul.
Jer 42:10	If you will only remain in this land, then I will build you up and not pull you down; I will plant you, and not pluck you up; for I am sorry for the disaster that I have brought upon you.
Jer 45:4	Thus says YHWH: I am going to break down what I have built, and pluck up what I have planted -that is, the whole land .

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- Ezek 15:6–8 Thus says the Lord God: Like the wood of the **vine** among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so I will give up the inhabitants of Jerusalem. I will set my face against them; although they escape from the fire, the fire shall still consume them; and you shall know that I am YHWH, when I set my face against them. And I will make the **land desolate**, because they have acted faithlessly.
- Ezek 17:22–23a Thus says the Lord God: I myself will take a **sprig** from the lofty top of a **cedar**; I will set it out. I will break off a tender one from the topmost of its young twigs; I myself **will plant** it on a high and lofty mountain. On the mountain height of Israel I **will plant** it.
- Ezek 19:10 Your mother was like a **vine in a vineyard** transplanted by the water, fruitful and full of branches from abundant water.
- Ezek 36:8–9 But you, O mountains of Israel, **shall shoot** out your **branches**, and yield your **fruit** to my people Israel; for they shall soon come home. See now, I am for you; I will turn to you, and you **shall be tilled and sown**.
- Ezek 36:35–36 And they will say, “This land that was desolate has become like the **garden of Eden**; and the waste and desolate and ruined towns are now inhabited and fortified.” Then the nations that are left all around you shall know that I, YHWH, have rebuilt the ruined places, and **replanted** that which was **desolate**; I, YHWH, have spoken, and I will do it.
- Hos 10:1–2 Israel is a luxuriant **vine** that yields its **fruit** ... Their heart is false, now they must bear their guilt. YHWH will break down their altars, and destroy their pillars.
- Hos 14:5–7 I will be like the **dew** to Israel; he **shall blossom** like the lily, he **shall strike roots** like the forests of Lebanon. His **shoots** shall spread out; they shall flourish as a **garden**; they **shall blossom** like the **vine**, their memory shall be like the **wine** of Lebanon.
- Amos 9:15 I **will plant** them upon their land, and they shall never again **be plucked up** out of the land I have given them.
- Mic 7:1–2 Woe is me! For I have become like one who, after the summer fruit has been gathered, after the **vintage** has been gleaned, finds no **cluster** to eat; there is not first-ripe fig for which I hunger. The faithful have disappeared from the land, and there is no one left who is upright; they all lie in wait for blood, and they hunt each other with nets.

TABLE 1 *Hebrew Bible and Second Temple references (cont.)*

Pss 44:1–2	We have heard with our own ears, O God, our ancestors have told us, what deeds you performed in their days, in the days of old: you with your own hand drove out the nations, but them you planted .
Pss 80:7–15	Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we might be saved. You brought out a vine out of Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it . You cleared the ground for it; it took root and filled the land. The mountains were covered with its shade, the mighty cedars with its branches; it sent out its branches to the sea, and its shoots to the River. Why then have you broken down its walls, so that all who pass along the way pluck its fruit ? Turn again, O God of hosts; look down from heaven, and see; have regard for this vine , the stock that your right hand planted .
Lam 1:15	YHWH has rejected all the warriors in the midst of me; he proclaimed a time against me to crush my young men; YHWH has trodden as in a wine press the virgin daughter Judah.
1 Chr 17:9a	I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in their own place, and be moved no more.
1 En. 10:16–18	Destroy injustice from the face of the earth. And every iniquitous deed will end, and the plant of righteousness and truth will appear forever and he will plant joy. And then all the righteous ones will escape; and become the living ones until they multiply and become tens of hundreds; and all the days of their youth and the years of their retirement they will complete in peace. And in those days the whole earth will be worked in righteousness, all of her planted with trees, and will find blessing.
1 En. 10:19	And they shall plant pleasant trees upon her- vines . And he who plants a vine upon her will produce wine for plentitude. And every seed that is sown on her, one measure will yield a thousand (measures) and one measure of olives will yield ten measures of presses of oil.
1 En. 62:8	The congregation of the holy ones shall be planted , and all the elect ones shall stand before him.
1 En. 84:6	Do not destroy, O my Lord, the flesh that has angered your from upon the earth, but sustain the flesh of righteousness and uprightness as a plant of eternal seed ; and hide not your face from the prayer of your servant, O Lord.

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- 1 En. 93:2 Concerning the **children of righteousness**, concerning the elect ones of the world, and concerning the **plant of truth**, I will speak these things, my children, verily I, Enoch, myself, and let you know (about it) according to that which was revealed to me from the heavenly vision, that which I have learned from the words of the holy angels, and understood from the heavenly tablets.
- 1 En. 93:5 Then after that at the completion of the third week a (certain) man shall be elected as the **plant of the righteous judgment**, and after him one (other) shall emerge as **the eternal plant of righteousness**.
- 1 En. 93:10 At its completion, there shall be elected **the elect ones of righteousness** from the **eternal plant of righteousness**, to whom shall be given sevenfold instruction concerning all his flock.
- 2 Bar. 32:2–4 Zion will be shaken in order that it will be rebuilt. That building will not remain; but it will again **be uprooted** after some time and will remain desolate for a time. And after that it is necessary that it will be renewed in glory and that it will be perfected into eternity.
- Jub. 1:15b–16 When they seek me with all their heart and with all their soul, I shall reveal them an abundance of peace in righteousness. And will all my heart and with all my soul I **shall transplant** them as a **righteous plant**.
- Jub. 7:34 And now, my children, hear and do justice and righteousness so that you might **be planted** in righteousness on the surface of the whole earth, and your honor may be lifted up before my God who saved me from the water of the Flood.
- Jub. 12:4 Worship the God of heaven, who **sends down rain** and **dew** upon the earth, and who makes everything by his word, and all life is in his presence.
- Jub. 15:28 And you commanded the sons of Israel and let them keep this sign of the covenant for their generations for an eternal ordinance. And they will not **be uprooted** from the land.
- Jub. 15:34 And great wrath from YHWH will be upon the sons of Israel because they have left his covenant and have turned aside from his words. They have made themselves gentiles **to be removed** and **be uprooted** from the land.

TABLE 1 *Hebrew Bible and Second Temple references (cont.)*

Jub. 16:17b–18	But from the sons of Isaac one would become a holy seed and he would not be counted among the nations because he would become the portion of the Most High and all his seed would fall by lot into that which God will rule so that he might become a people belonging to YHWH, a special possession from all people, and so that he might become a kingdom of priests and a holy people.
Jub. 16:26	And he (Abraham) blessed his Creator who created him in his generation because by his will he created him for he knew and he perceived that from him there would be a righteous planting for eternal generations and a holy seed for him so that he might be like the one whom made everything.
Jub. 21:22	Be careful not to walk in their ways, and to tread in their path, or to commit a mortal sin before God Most High so that he will hide his face from you, and deliver you into the power of your sin, and uproot you from the earth, and your seed from beneath the sky, and your name and seed will perish from all the earth.
Jub. 21:24	And he will bless you in all your deeds, and he will raise up from you a righteous plant in all the earth throughout all the generations of the earth; and my name and your name shall not cease from beneath heaven forever.
Jub. 36:6–7	(Isaac's farewell): Remember, my sons, YHWH, the God of Abraham, your father, so that he might multiply you and increase your seed like the stars of heaven with regard to number and so that he will plant you on the earth as a righteous planting which will not be uprooted for all the eternal generations.
1QS 8:5–7a	The Community council shall be founded on truth, to be an everlasting plantation , a holy house for Israel and the foundation of the holy of holies for Aaron, true witnesses for the judgment and chosen by the will of God to atone for the land to render the wicked their retribution.
1QS 11:8	He unites their assembly to the sons of the heavens in order (to form) the council of the Community and a foundation of the building of holiness to be an everlasting plantation throughout all future ages.
4CD 1:5–8	And at the period of wrath, he visited them and caused to sprout from Israel and from Aaron a shoot of the planting , in order to possess his land and to become fat with the good things of the soil.

1QFestival Prayers Frags, 1 + 2 (4Q508 1)	For you console us from our distress, and you gather together the exiles for the time and our scattered ones you assemble for the age of your mercies upon the assembly, like drops upon the earth in seed time, like rain upon the plants in the time of grass.
1QH ^a 6 (14): 15	Their root will sprout like a flower of the field forever , to make a shoot grow in branches of the everlasting plantation so that it covers all the world with its shade, and its crown reaches up to the skies, and its roots down to the abyss. All the streams of Eden will water its branches and they will be seas without limits.
1QH ^a 8 (16): 1–16	I give thanks to You, O YHWH, for You set me by at the source of streams in a dry land, and at the spring of water in a parched land, in a garden watered by channels ... a plantation of cypresses and elms, together with cedar. Trees of life in the secret source, hidden among all the trees at the water, which shall make a shoot grow in the everlasting plantation ... The shoot of holiness grows up into a planting of truth , hidden and not esteemed. And because it is not known its secret is sealed up. (vacat) But You, my God, You protect its fruit with the mystery of powerful warriors, holy spirits ... But You, O my God, have placed Your words in my mouth, as showers of early rain, for all who thirst and as a spring of living waters.
4Q415 4QInstruction Frag. 1 Col II: 2	For when he walks perfectly in all your instructions. Then eternal, and your holy seed will not or not shall your seed be removed from the holy inheritance of ... and you will rejoice in your children.
4Q418 Frag. 81: 12b–13a	And everyone who is called by his name (will be) holy. During all times his splendor, his beauty for the eternal plantation ... world. In it will walk all who inherit the earth.
4Q433a 4QHodayot-like Frag. 2	For the instructor for the glory of a delightful plantation he has planted in his garden and in his vineyard , his garden-beds and its branches will bear fruit and multiply its sprouts with support up to the heights of heaven , and branches for eternal generations, and to produce foliage and its leaves and its shoots will be in it, without brambles and thistles its roots will not be pulled up from his bed of spices ...

TABLE 1 *Hebrew Bible and Second Temple references (cont.)*

4Q475	And there will be no more guilty deeds on the earth and not ...
4QRenewed Earth	destroyer, and every adversary; and all the world will be like Eden , and all ... the earth will be at peace forever.
4Q500 Frag. 1:1–7	May your mulberry trees blossom and ... your winepress , built of stone ... at the gate of the holy height ... your plantation and your glorious channels ... your delicious branches ...

The core research questions for this study are: Why is metaphor a dominant mode of expression in the Hebrew Bible, especially when comparing the relationship between the divine and the people? How does metaphor contribute to God's accessibility? Why is the supreme deity of the nation of Israel depicted as the planter, but more particularly, as the vintner of the people, his choice vine? Can this image be found in other ancient Near Eastern religious traditions? And if so, is it used there in similar ways? Why is the metaphor: YHWH IS THE VINTNER OF ISRAEL primarily a pre-exilic concept? And how did this metaphorical discourse offer a glimpse into the social, material, and religious world of the ancient Israelites? Furthermore, how did the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. and subsequent exile of the people from the land alter the depiction of YHWH as a vintner? Finally, why does garden imagery reminiscent of Eden replace the vine metaphor and become the predominant plant metaphorical discourse of the post-exilic period?

The biblical text does not completely reveal the divine; he is seen by some, but not by others. And even though he appears to have a body of some sort, it may not be made of the same substance as human flesh. Paul Ricœur's hermeneutical theory of metaphor has been instrumental in discussing some of the intangible aspects of the divine. He argues that metaphor is an ideal means to communicate what he terms "the symbol." Symbols are defined as "any structure of signification in which a direct, primary, literal meaning designates, in addition, another meaning which is indirect, secondary, and figurative and which can be apprehended only through the first."³⁵ According to the biblical text, the divine was not revealed literally to many people, so the "symbol" of the divine is conjugated metaphorically in the language of the biblical texts to provide various snapshots of divinity. Utilizing Ricœur's hermeneutical theory,

35 Paul Ricœur, "Existence and Hermeneutics," in *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 12–13.

the various metaphors for YHWH also have the “ability to engender a conceptual diversity, an unlimited number of potential interpretations at a conceptual level.”³⁶ In this way, metaphor became a vehicle of interpretation for biblical thought.

The metaphor of the divine as a planter of the people is only one of many metaphorical expressions for YHWH, yet this metaphor remains a consistent characterization of the relationship between the Hebrew people and their god. It is depicted in the Song of the Sea (Exodus 15), it is tied to the state in the Promise to David (2 Samuel 7), and the pre-exilic prophets utilize this metaphor to contrast divine favor as a flourishing vineyard, versus divine wrath as sour grapes. The exiled priest, Ezekiel, also draws upon the biblical portrayal of YHWH as the planter of the people when he envisions a new Israel. In this Israel, the people are to be planted by God for all eternity. Post-biblical authors also noticed this metaphorical concept and utilized it in their writings. This particular metaphor remains a consistent motif in biblical and post-biblical Jewish literature. Therefore, the tracing of its origin and subsequent depictions throughout these texts should prove to be both interesting and illuminating.

Because the divine is typically displayed metaphorically in biblical literature, metaphor studies can help to illuminate why particular metaphors are chosen. According to George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, “metaphor is one of our most important tools for trying to comprehend partially what cannot be comprehended totally: our feelings, aesthetic experiences, moral practices, and spiritual awareness.”³⁷ I propose that the metaphor of the divine planting can be attested to several ancient Near Eastern sources, yet the metaphor of the divine as vintner is more applicable to ancient Israel because of the society’s interest in viticulture.

Ancient Israel was an agrarian culture. The people depended on the land for their sustenance and they relied on their god for rain and protection from drought. However, this dependence on the soil did not distinguish the ancient Israelites from their neighbors. The ideal topography and climate for wine production in their territory is one of the factors that separated them from other cultures, namely Egypt (Deut 11:10–15). The exodus and wilderness wanderings are a stark contrast to the images of the Promised Land: milk, honey and bushels of grapes (Num 13:27). The archaeological evidence supports this picture of ancient Israel, especially in reference to the vineyard.

36 Paul Ricœur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (trans. David Pellauer; Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 64.

37 Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 193.

The agrarian context of ancient Israel is vital to understanding not only this metaphor, but also why it evolved with the history of the people. According to linguist Sir John Lyons, “language-behavior is a culture-dependent activity.”³⁸ Therefore, as the culture changes it is expected that the language will reflect those changes. The exile (586 B.C.E.) provides an ideal opportunity to examine the changes in the metaphorical idiom. I will demonstrate that the connection to the physical land and to viticulture in particular was displaced due to the forced migration of the people from their homeland. It may be surprising that a metaphor so rooted in the land of Israel would remain an established image in post-exilic texts, including Second Temple Jewish literature. Yet, the literature portrays a rich metaphorical discourse on the divine as planter of the people, even by sectarian groups removed from the Jerusalem Temple. YHWH is still the planter, but the people do not include all of Israel. Instead, the chosen people are a more delineated group of people than is found in earlier biblical texts.

Furthermore, the emphasis on viticulture is less predominant after the exile. This, I will argue, is to be expected considering the significant decline in viticulture production. In place of vine imagery, the Garden of Eden is often evoked as the ideal place of planting and there is an eschatological aspect to the length of the planting. The metaphor is reworked to resemble the religious culture of the time and therefore it remains a prominent theme in early Judaism.

3 Recent Scholarship on the Metaphor: YHWH IS THE PLANTER OF THE PEOPLE

To date, no one has attempted to provide a metaphorical analysis of this particular image of God as portrayed in the biblical texts. There have been some studies on the concept of “metaphor” in the Hebrew Bible, especially since the 1970s when literary criticism began to be applied to biblical studies more regularly, but only a few scholars have produced works on specific metaphors for God.³⁹

38 Sir John Lyons, *Linguistic Semantics: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1995), 291.

39 Job Y. Jindo's recent publication, *Biblical Metaphor Reconsidered: A Cognitive Approach to Poetic Prophecy in Jeremiah 1–24* (HSM 64; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2010), 9–13, gives a detailed survey of the last few decades of research on biblical metaphor. Some of the most noteworthy studies on biblical metaphor have been produced by Alter, *Art of Biblical Poetry*; Weiss, *Bible From Within*; Francis Landy, *Paradoxes of Paradise: Identity and Difference in the Song of Songs* (BLS 7; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1983). T.K. Beal, “Literary Theory, Literary Criticism, and the Bible,” *DBI* 2 (1999): 79–85, is also

Marc Zvi Brettler analyzed the metaphor of God as king, Horejs Kowalski discussed the metaphorical concept of God as rock, and Brent A. Strawn examined the theriomorphic association of the deity and the lion.⁴⁰ Marjo Korpel's monographic study analyzed several metaphors for the divine, and therefore is not limited to just one image in particular.⁴¹ Tikva Frymer-Kensky published an article in 2006 on "The Planting of Man" which situated the metaphor MAN IS PLANT in its ancient Near Eastern context.⁴² In this way, she was able to show how this image may have been borrowed from a broader cultural base and was not novel to ancient Israel. Her article is fundamental to understanding the metaphorical mapping between images from the plant world and humanity for a culture dependent on agriculture. Additionally, Carey Ellen Walsh published her dissertation on viticulture in ancient Israel in 2000.⁴³ This book is useful for illuminating not only the importance of viticulture and horticulture within Israel, but also in the broader ancient Near Eastern landscape.

Typically, studies on metaphor are concentrated on specific books of the Bible or even various passages within a particular book. For example, Isaiah 5, the Song of the Vineyard, clearly portrays the metaphor: YHWH IS THE VINTNER OF ISRAEL. Several articles have been written on this passage as well as Isa 27:2–6 and Jer 2:21, which portray allusions to this song, but their arguments have been primarily concerned with the genre and setting of the song rather than with the formation of the metaphor over the course of the biblical tradition.⁴⁴ Furthermore, much of biblical scholarship on metaphor

a useful introduction to the literary study of the Bible that has flourished the last few decades.

- 40 Marc Zvi Brettler, *God is King: Understanding an Israelite Metaphor* (JSOTSup 76; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1989); Horejs Kowalski, *Rock of Ages: A Theological Study of the Word צור as a Metaphor for Israel's God* (Ph.D. diss., Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1996); Brent A. Strawn, *What Is Stronger than a Lion? Leonine Image and Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East* (OBO 212; Fribourg Vendenhoeck: Academic Press, 2005).
- 41 Marjo C.A. Korpel, *A Rift in the Clouds: Ugaritic and Hebrew Descriptions of the Divine* (UBL 8; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1990).
- 42 Tikva Frymer-kensky, "The Planting of Man: A Study in Biblical Imagery," pages 129–136 in *Love and Death in the Ancient Near East: Essays in honor of Marvin H. Pope* (ed. John H. Marks et al.; Guilford: Four Quarters, 1987).
- 43 Carey Ellen Walsh, *The Fruit of the Vine: Viticulture in Ancient Israel* (HSM 60; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2000). Also see, Pauline Albenda, "Grapevines in Ashurbanipal's Garden," *BASOR* 215 (1974): 15–17, for a description of viticulture in the broader ancient Near Eastern context.
- 44 Even though this song is a unified literary unit, it is a complex song and so there is little

the last thirty years has been rooted in the premise that since God cannot be understood directly, we can only speak of him indirectly through literary constructs such as metaphor.⁴⁵ The goal of this study is to prove the contrary, namely that conceptual metaphor highlights the presence of the divine within the ecological environment of the ancient Israelites.

Job Y. Jindo recently published a book focused on biblical metaphor in Jeremiah 1–24.⁴⁶ His study outlines a specific style of methodological survey, a text-oriented approach, which examines a variety of metaphors within a biblical text. Jindo devotes part of a chapter to the metaphor: *THE LAND OF ISRAEL IS YHWH'S ROYAL GARDEN*.⁴⁷ The focus of his study is on Jeremiah 1–24, but he does mention Exodus 15 and several other prophetic texts as a point of reference for his argument. My focus on a specific metaphor pertaining to God and his people would be a metaphor-oriented pattern, but his study is a useful resource.

I believe the present state of scholarship provides an ideal opportunity to examine this topic in greater detail. Research on the metaphor *YHWH IS THE PLANTER OF ISRAEL* is fragmented and has largely been done on a micro-level. Furthermore, scholars who study the Hebrew Bible, Ancient Judaism, early Christianity, and even Rabbinic Judaism, will benefit from this research. We live in a society where the connection to the arable soil is diminishing as large corporations control much of the agricultural production. Ancient Israel was an agrarian society in which the relationship between the land and the religion was intertwined. Furthermore, the fertility of the land as a marker for divine favor is almost incomprehensible to modern society. Ronald A. Simkins study on the importance of nature to Israel's worldview illustrates that, "biblical scholars have too readily dismissed the natural world from being

scholarly consensus regarding issues such as genre and etymology of various words. See John D.W. Watts, *Isaiah 1–33 Revised* (Waco: Word Books, 2005), 81–82, for a complete bibliography on the Song of the Vineyard. John T. Willis, "The Genre of Isaiah 5:1–7," *JBL* 96 (1977): 337–362, lists twelve possible genres for the song. See especially, R.W.L. Moberly, "Whose Justice? Which Righteousness? The Interpretation of Isaiah v 16," *VT* 51 (2001): 55–68. The Song of the Vineyard as a "juridical parable" has found recent support among scholars. See Watts, *Isaiah 1–33 Revised*, 84, for a list of these scholars and those who do not agree with the consensus.

45 See, for example, Macky, *Centrality of Metaphors to Biblical Thought*, 188. Macky argues that metaphor is prominent in the biblical text because God is mysterious. Korpel also discusses the importance of metaphor as a vehicle for interpreting an "invisible" god. See Korpel, *Rift in the Clouds*, 619.

46 Jindo, *Biblical Metaphor Reconsidered*.

47 Ibid., 161–185.

a significant factor in the development of Israel's religion and culture."⁴⁸ The aim of this study is to trace one specific metaphorical discourse throughout biblical literature and ancient Judaism in order to perhaps provide a more detailed understanding of how the deep connection to the land shaped ancient thought and belief.

4 Organization of the Book

Chapter two will discuss the emerging field of cognitive metaphor theory and how breakthroughs in this field over the last few decades have proven useful for biblical studies. Metaphor theory has had a tumultuous relationship with philosophy beginning with a misinterpretation of Aristotle's position on metaphor, so attention will be given to the key contributors to this discussion. This chapter will also introduce the importance of cognitive linguistics in evaluating metaphor. Cognitive linguistics is a relatively young field, which emerged in the 1970s. Job Y. Jindo eloquently categorizes this emerging field as, "a new philological approach for investigating the relationship between language, culture, and cognition in antiquity."⁴⁹ A cognitive linguistic approach presupposes an investigation of the conceptual world of a given text or metaphorical expression because the worldview of any culture will ultimately be reflected in the language. Therefore, analysis of the conceptual framework behind the metaphor *YHWH IS THE PLANTER OF ISRAEL* is critical to understanding the metaphor as a whole as well as the subsequent offshoots of the metaphor (i.e., *YHWH IS THE VINTNER OF ISRAEL*). Finally, this chapter will delineate the relevant terminology and methodology pertinent to this study.

Chapters three, four, and five comprise Part 1 of the book, which will explore ancient Near Eastern literature and iconographic evidence related to the deity as a planter. Chapter three will give special emphasis to the emergence of the storm-god, since this was the deity responsible for agricultural production in most ancient Near Eastern cultures. The foundational biblical text for this study, the Song of the Sea (Exod 15:1–18), will also be analyzed, with special

48 See Ronald A. Simkins, *Creator and Creation: Nature in the Worldview of Ancient Israel* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1994), 2. Chapter five will discuss the reasons for this dismissal; namely, an attempt to show the superiority of biblical religion over "pagan" religion.

49 Job Y. Jindo, "Toward a Poetics of the Biblical Mind: Language, Culture, and Cognition." *VT* 59 (2009): 222.

attention given to verse seventeen. Allusions to the song can be found throughout the Hebrew Bible because it served as a source of identity to a group of tribes aiming to unite under a shared faith. This is a song of commemoration, but more importantly, it served as a “collective memory” of a merging nation.⁵⁰ The memory of a society is delineated at a group level and establishes the identity of that specific group. In this way, Aleida Assman argues that, “cultures create a contract between the living, the dead, and the not yet living. They do not have to start anew in every generation because they are standing on the shoulders of giants whose knowledge they can reuse and reinterpret.”⁵¹ Thus, the younger generation is taught the memories of the older generation, but often some of those traditions are reworked to coalesce with the ideals of the current generation. I will demonstrate in this chapter that this song, and in particular the image of God as a planter of the people, served as one of the earliest memories of ancient Israel.

Chapter four will investigate traces of the metaphor of the divine as a planter within ancient Near Eastern sources. Depicting the divine metaphorically was commonplace throughout the ancient Near East and there are many gods depicted as planters of crops as well as planters of people. This chapter will also

50 Memory studies is a relatively nascent field, blossoming only within the last thirty years as scholars transitioned from strictly representing the past through a historical lens to a more social perspective on memory. Maurice Halbwachs, a French sociologist, was the first person to write about “collective memory” in his *Social Frameworks of Memory* (*Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*) in 1925. Halbwachs was a student of Emile Durkheim and rejected Freudian notions that the “individual’s unconscious acts as a repository for all past experiences,” Jeffrey K. Olick and Joyce Robbins, “Social Memory Studies: From ‘Collective Memory’ to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practice,” *Annu Rev Sociol* 24 (1998): 109. He was able to define memory using Durkheim’s theory of collective representation while rejecting the notion of memory found in individual psychology. Halbwachs maintained that it was impossible for individuals to remember outside of the group context. “Memories are not preserved in my brain or in some nook of my mind to which I alone have access: for they are recalled by me externally, and the groups of which I am a part of at any time give the means to reconstruct them ...” Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory* (trans. F.J. Ditter, Jr. and V.Y. Ditter; Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1992), 38. Halbwachs drew on Durkheim’s argument that the collective memories of a group became a source of social strength. According to Jan Assman and John Czaplicka, “his research transferred our understanding of memory from a biological framework into a cultural one and opened the doors for his theory of ‘cultural memory,’ a collective concept.” Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,” *NGC* 64 (1995): 125.

51 Aleida Assmann, “Canon and Archive,” in *Cultural Memory Studies: An Interdisciplinary Handbook* (ed. A. Erll and A. Nünning. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co., 2008), 97.

evaluate how these cultures may have influenced ancient Israelite depictions of YHWH, in particular, YHWH as a planter. Until the last few decades, biblical scholarship was more preoccupied with highlighting the “novelties” of biblical religion rather than acknowledging the continuities apparent in the cultural milieu.⁵² A comparative analysis of the planting metaphor will illuminate the affinities as well as the novelties of this image within the ancient Near East.

Chapter five will situate the conceptual metaphor YHWH IS THE VINTNER OF ISRAEL in ancient Israel’s agricultural environment. Viticulture is the product of a stable, settled community as it takes years to cultivate and glean vines for wine production. The climate of Israel was also favorable for vine planting.⁵³ The archaeological material is extensive and reveals that viticulture was an important part of every day life in ancient Israel, whereas beer was the drink of choice in the majority of other ancient Near Eastern cities.⁵⁴ Furthermore, water was scarce and often contaminated which made wine important for daily sustenance. According to Carey Ellen Walsh, “vineyards demanded labor, care, even love, and brought a measure of economic stability, along with joy, relaxation, and celebration ... It offered too a rich source of imagery for the biblical writers to exploit for their theological and other ideological agendas.”⁵⁵ The process involved in wine making would have been familiar in ancient Israelite society, especially in the Iron Age, and so it should not be surprising that this imagery is called upon to illuminate the intricate relationship between God and the people.

Part 2 comprises chapters six and seven, which specifically catalog YHWH as the planter/vintner in the Hebrew Bible. Chapter six gives special attention to Isaiah 5 (The Song of the Vineyard) as well as the writings of other eighth century prophets. The frequent use of a vineyard as a metaphor and specifically

52 Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), vii–viii.

53 Cf. Walsh, *Fruit of the Vine*, 18.

54 According to Walsh, “epigraphic evidence includes the Gezer calendar of the agricultural year, the Samaria ostraca, and the *mlk* jar handles from throughout Judah. These, along with archaeological evidence of presses, wine jugs, jar stoppers, strainers, storage facilities, and paleobotanical finds at various sites, yield a picture of significant wine production in ancient Israel.” Walsh, *Fruit of the Vine*, 7. Egypt and Mesopotamia do not have the climate necessary for large-scale wine production. See Victor H. Matthews, “Treading the Winepress: Actual and Metaphorical Viticulture in the Ancient Near East,” *Semeia* 86 (1999): 21, for more information on the production of beer as a staple drink in ancient Mesopotamia. See also, Oded Borowski, *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1987), for a broader study of the agrarian environment in ancient Israel.

55 Walsh, *Fruit of the Vine*, 250.

as a metaphor depicting the Israelites in the pre-exilic prophetic texts, speaks to a specific set of inferences regarding fertility and harvest. Vine imagery is typically associated with abundance and the harvest season was a time to enjoy the fruit of the labor. There was an expectation of high productivity, yet God's vineyard, which is the people of Israel, produced sour "stinking" grapes instead of lush grapes.⁵⁶ Even though the people were pledged to YHWH and were considered his choice vine, the prophets chastised them for sequestering land from the poor and worshipping other gods. Many of these passages depict the disillusionment of the vintner: how could such a carefully tended vine not yield the expected harvest? This chapter will also explore the moral component behind the image of the grapes as a harvest of righteousness. The theme of a "planting of righteousness" becomes an important concept in post-exilic texts.

Chapter seven will examine the impact of the Babylonian exile on the metaphor of the deity as vintner. The uprooting of the people and subsequent exile was a defining moment in the social history of the Jewish people. This was a dark period for biblical literature and much of the writings are either lamentations or visions of a future restoration for the people.⁵⁷ Several of the post-exilic texts are also eschatological in nature and depict the re-birth of a specific "remnant" of people returning from exile (Isa 60:20–21). Creation imagery as well as several references to a "re-planting" are likened to the Garden of Eden (Ezek 36:35–36; Isa 51:3).⁵⁸ Isaiah 27 is especially noteworthy because

56 See Robert P. Carroll, "YHWH's Sour Grapes: Images of Food and Drink in the Prophetic Discourse of the Hebrew Bible," *Semeia* 86 (1999): 113–131.

57 The textualization of the Hebrew Bible was a complex process, which we may never fully decipher. The Persian and Hellenistic periods are often argued as the time frame when this literature was written down. The structuring and ordering of the canon was a product of these time periods, but many of the texts were likely composed much earlier. The eighth and seventh centuries B.C.E. provide a more ideal framework for the compilation of the oral tradition as well as a written history of the monarchy. For a detailed analysis of why the eighth and seventh centuries were the most favorable environment for the textualization of the pre-exilic corpus see, William M. Schniedewind, *How the Bible Became a Book: The Textualization of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 64–118. Baruch Halpern and Sara Japhet are two scholars who argue for a Persian and Hellenistic dating. Cf. Baruch Halpern, "Erasing History: The Minimalist Assault on Ancient Israel," *BRev* 11 (1995): 27–35, 47. Sara Japhet, "In Search of Ancient Israel: Revisionism at All Costs," in *The Jewish Past Revisited* (ed. D.N. Myers and D.B. Ruderman; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 212–233.

58 According to a study done by T. Stordalen, "Eden emerged as a conventional literary topic in biblical Hebrew literature—at least from the early Persian Age onwards." *Echoes of Eden:*

images of YHWH slaying the serpent in the sea and the Song of the Vineyard are combined to form a picture of a future Israel.⁵⁹ The exile and its aftermath raised many questions regarding the identity of a people who had taken great comfort in knowing that they were the planting of a dedicated and loyal vintner. One of the goals of this chapter is to illuminate the disillusionment of the uprooting as well as how the planting metaphor was reinterpreted for the remnant that returned to the land.

Chapter seven will also investigate how mythic material such as the divine combat myth (Exodus 15), re-emerge as a motif in connection with the restored community. Isaiah 51 illustrates the combination of the old ritual pattern with eschatological events pertaining to a future otherworldly Jerusalem. The representation of YHWH as a storm-god warrior, intimately involved in the affairs of the people, remains a persistent motif even in post-exilic literature.

Part 3 (chapter 8) looks at specific instances of the divine planting in Second Temple literature. Chapter eight will survey divine planting imagery in the Pseudepigrapha and the Dead Sea Scrolls. In particular, this chapter will investigate how the metaphorical idea of people represented as plants in many Second Temple texts reflects only a specific group of Jews, the righteous ones. In early biblical texts, all the people of Israel are God's planting. In later biblical texts such as Jubilees and Enoch, only a remnant is considered part of this planting (Jub. 1:16–17). Post-biblical Jewish authors often posing as infamous biblical characters continue to develop the metaphor of God as planter, but his "pleasant planting" is only for a select few. The select few mentioned are those committed to the covenant and the prophecies specify that they are the ones who would not be uprooted in the future.

Finally, this chapter will survey the image of God as planter within the Dead Sea Scrolls. Just as the authors of Jubilees and Enoch limited the application of the metaphor to a righteous remnant of Israel, the Qumran literature narrows the metaphor even further to apply "only to the community itself: both the present, historical community and, at the same time, some future, ideal community which will be the eschatological righteous remnant of Israel."⁶⁰ The members of this exclusive group believed they were living and participating in

Genesis 2–3 and Symbolism of the Eden Garden in Biblical Hebrew Literature (CBET 25; Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 474.

59 For an introduction to Isaiah 27 and the recontextualization of the Song of the Vineyard, see Marvin A. Sweeney, "New Gleanings from an Old Vineyard: Isaiah 27 Reconsidered," in *Early Jewish and Christian Exegesis: Studies in Memory of William Hugh Brownlee* (ed. C.A. Evans et al.; SPHS 10; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987).

60 Tiller, "The Eternal Planting," 334.

the “eternal planting” of God (1QS 8:5–7) in order to atone for the sins of the wicked, i.e. those living in Jerusalem and associated with the “Wicked Priest.” In the pre-exilic passages, the people were planted on God’s own mountain, Mt. Zion, where the temple stood. Isaiah 5 mentions that the vintner built a watchtower in the midst of the vineyard (Isa 5:2), which is an allusion to the temple. In the post-exilic book of Ezekiel, there is an image of a heavenly temple, which is often portrayed as a garden similar to the Garden of Eden in other Second Temple texts. For the community at Qumran, however, the participants believed that they were the temple of God because the temple in Jerusalem had become corrupt. The connection between the “eternal planting,” the Garden of Eden imagery, and the temple of God coalesce to form a distinct ideology among a specific group of people. The fixed metaphor YAHWEH IS THE PLANTER OF ISRAEL continued to evolve alongside the history of the Jewish people.

Chapter nine will provide a synthesis and conclusion on the significance of the metaphor YAHWEH IS THE PLANTER OF ISRAEL. This metaphor has a long literary tradition that is based on early descriptions of the divine as the planter of the people, the Song of the Sea being one of the earliest known images. As a foundational myth for the ancient Israelites, several metaphors for the divine emerge from this song. This study encapsulates the planting metaphor beginning with the Song of the Sea and throughout biblical literature and Second Temple Jewish texts. The scope of this study does not include the use of this metaphor in early Christian Literature (i.e., Jesus as the true vine in John 15:1–8)⁶¹ or even rabbinic *mashal*. But rather, the focus is on the evolution of the metaphor within the Hebrew Bible and how it resonates in Second Temple literature. This chapter will also illuminate possible future research opportunities on this significant metaphor in Christian and Rabbinic sources.

61 See, for example, Joshua Schwartz, “Treading the Grapes of Wrath: The Wine Press in Ancient Jewish and Christian Tradition,” *TZ* 49 (1993): 215–228.

Metaphor Theory: A Useful Tool for Biblical Studies

The category of metaphor has had a long and often tumultuous history within the philosophical world. Mark Johnson argued that without metaphor, there would be no philosophy since “the history of western philosophy has been one long development of the objectivist dismissal of metaphor, punctuated rarely by bold declarations of the pervasiveness of metaphor in thought.”¹ This debate has two opposing sides: those who maintain that our abstract concepts are defined by metaphor and those who view metaphor as a form of ornamentation with little cognitive value.² The latter view has been the predominant position for the majority of the last two thousand years, which is noteworthy considering some of the first writings on “metaphor,” initiated this dichotomy.

This chapter will provide a methodological basis for the cognitive importance of metaphor. A brief history of metaphor theory since Aristotle will highlight the frequent categorization of the trope as an embellishment, useful only for poetic decoration. In the last thirty years, however, cognitive linguists transformed metaphor’s reputation by insisting that metaphor has cognitive value. Linguists Lynne Cameron and Graham Low argue that, “metaphor in one form or another is absolutely fundamental to the way language systems develop over time and are structured, as well as to the way human beings consolidate and extend their ideas about themselves, their relationships and their knowledge of the world.”³ Thus, metaphor can be a useful tool for studying societal development, ancient societies in particular.

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- 1 Mark Johnson, “Philosophy’s Debt to Metaphor,” in *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought* (ed. R.W. Gibbs, Jr.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 39. Johnson argues that, “according to objectivist metaphysics and theory of knowledge, the world consists of objects, properties, and relations that exist in themselves, independent of human conceptual systems and human agency ... Therefore, there cannot be a significant role for metaphor in this picture of mind and world because the cognitive content of a metaphor would need to be reducible to some set of literal concepts or prepositions, if it is to have any meaning and play a role in truth claims. If conceptual metaphor is essential for abstract thought, then the classic objectivist/literalist picture cannot be correct,” *ibid.*, 45.
 - 2 *Ibid.*, 39.
 - 3 Lynne Cameron and Graham Low, eds., *Researching and Applying Metaphor*, The Cambridge Applied Linguistics Series (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), xii.

The recent cognitive movement within metaphor theory has influenced biblical studies as well. This chapter will highlight how advances in cognitive linguistics have aided research inquiry into the worldview of ancient Israel. The mapping of conceptual metaphors depicted in the Hebrew Bible can work in tandem with archaeological endeavors and comparative literary analysis to provide another method of interpretation. Even though metaphorical discourse has had a turbulent literary history, the present era is an ideal time to discuss its analytical significance.

1 A Brief History of Metaphor in Figurative Thought

The ancient Greek philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, were among the first to reference and give descriptions of this trope. The word “metaphor” comes from the Greek *metapherein*, which means to carry over, transfer. Plato (429–347 B.C.E.) does not give a specific definition of metaphor, yet according to V.R.L. Sage, his dialogues abound in “examples and ideas about the significance of metaphor and figurative language which have proved enormously influential.”⁴ Plato presents a dual line of thinking about metaphor: one being that all language originated in metaphor and the other purporting that language is unstable and untrustworthy because “it can never identify absolutely with what it seeks to picture.”⁵ The polarity that language has two forms, true and false, stems from the teachings of Socrates and greatly influenced the dualistic philosophy that Plato emanates in his writings regarding the role of metaphor in literature.

The writings of Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.) portray a more concrete view of metaphor than is found in the dialogues of Plato. Aristotle saw metaphor on the one hand as a simple replacement, and on the other hand, as a sign of genius.

But the greatest thing, by far, is to be a master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learnt from others; and it is also a sign of genius since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of similarity of dissimilars. Through resemblance, metaphor makes things clearer.⁶

4 V. Sage, “Metaphor in Literature,” in *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics* (ed. R.E. Asher; Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1993), 2457.

5 Ibid., 2457.

6 Aristotle, *Poetics* (trans. W.D. Ross, 1459a), 5–7.

Eva Kittay contends that, “Aristotle had already pointed out the cognitive importance of metaphor, particularly metaphor based on analogy,” by making this statement.⁷ Metaphor, she argues, has the ability to provide us with a “way of learning something new about the world, or about how the world may be perceived and understood.”⁸ Yet, Aristotle also highlighted some of the rhetorical benefits of metaphor in *The Art of Rhetoric*, such as the ability to ornament a subject or to produce vividness.⁹ Thus, a schism arose between figurative and literal language, which supported the use of literal language as more noble than the figurative use of language.¹⁰

Mark Johnson, a leader in the transformation of metaphor studies in the last thirty years, claims that Aristotle’s notions of the function of metaphor and its relationship with a simile has been misinterpreted for two millennia. According to Johnson, philosophers have perpetuated the belief that, “a metaphor is an elliptical simile useful for stylistic, rhetorical, and didactic purposes, but which can be translated into a literal paraphrase without any loss of cognitive content.”¹¹ The roots of metaphoric language depicted as a figurative use of speech, and in particular, a predominant form of ornamentation, can be traced to the ancient Greek literature even though this may not have been Aristotle’s original intent for metaphoric language.

The Roman philosopher, Cicero (106–43 B.C.E.) and the first century C.E. Roman rhetorician, Quintilian, both saw metaphor as a sub-par expression of comparison. Therefore, V.R.L. Sage claims that the development from “fifth-century Greek to Augustan Rome seems to be that of a progressive pragmatism.

7 Eva Feder Kittay, *Metaphor: Its Cognitive Force and Linguistic Structure* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 2.

8 Ibid., 3.

9 See, for example, Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric* (trans. H. Treece; Cambridge: Loeb Classical Library, 1926), 220, 238–239.

10 According to David H. Aaron, “figurative is a general designation for nonliteral speech acts including many standard rhetorical devices such as irony, sarcasm and cynicism, allegory, hyperbole, metonymy, and of course metaphor. Each of these requires us, as interpreters, to recognize that the literal meaning of an expression is not identical to what the speaker intends us to understand.” Therefore, there is a level of ambiguity in metaphor which gave rise to literal language as clearer and thus, more noble than figurative language. David H. Aaron, *Biblical Ambiguities: Metaphor, Semantics, and Divine Imagery* (BRLAJ 4; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 1.

11 Mark Johnson, “Introduction: Metaphor in Philosophical Tradition,” in *Philosophical Perspective on Metaphor* (ed. M. Johnson; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981) 5–7.

Aristotle always took an empirical approach, but he believed rhetoric to be an art of the possible whereas for Quintilian it is a set of exercises to commit to memory.¹² These Greek and Roman philosophers placed metaphor as a figure of speech rather than a figure of thought. This led to other rhetoricians viewing metaphor as a lower level of persuasive speech.¹³ Also, they concentrated their inquiry on the metaphor of individual words rather than metaphorical phrases or sentences.

The Middle Ages perpetuated the distrust of figurative language bred by its predecessors, although there were a few philosophers who saw metaphor in a more positive light. For example, the Italian priest and theologian, Aquinas (1225–1274), noticed the abundance of metaphors in the Bible. He argued that Scripture makes use of metaphors as both necessary and useful. The Jewish exegete, Ibn Ezra (1089–1164) also expressed a more positive conception of metaphor.¹⁴ According to Mordechai Cohen, Ibn Ezra differed from Moses Maimonides because Maimonides saw a distinct clarification between figurative language and literal truth (*haiqa*), whereas Ibn Ezra was able to envision a greater potential for metaphor.¹⁵ Many medieval theologians, however, were opposed to the embellishment of language. Mark Johnson maintains that this opposition arose out of “the monastic emphasis on the inward and spiritual over the outward and physical.”¹⁶ In this way, the literal truth was prized over embellishment and metaphor was categorized with the latter.

Even in the early twentieth century, when logical positivism emerged, metaphor continued to be disregarded as a useful method for interpretation. Andrea Weiss, who has written on figurative language in the Bible, summarizes metaphor theory in the early twentieth century as follows: “metaphor was considered unimportant, deviant, and vague, and an appropriate tool for politicians or poets, but not for scientists attempting to accurately describe physical reality.”¹⁷ It was not until I.A. Richards’s published *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* and Max Black published *Models and Metaphor*, that scholars began to view metaphor as

12 Sage, “Metaphor in Literature,” 2456.

13 Johnson, “Introduction: Metaphor in Philosophical Tradition,” 9.

14 See Andrea L. Weiss, *Figurative Language in Biblical Prose Narrative: Metaphor in the Book of Samuel* (VTSup 107; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 9. Weiss offers an exceptional review of metaphor theory from Aristotle to the present on pages 1–20.

15 Mordechai Cohen, “Moses Ibn Ezra Vs. Maimonides: Argument for a Poetic Definition of Metaphor,” *Edebiyât* 11 (2000), 13–14.

16 Johnson, “Introduction: Metaphor in Philosophical Tradition,” 9–10.

17 Weiss, *Figurative Language in Biblical Prose*, 10.

a conceptual tool for meaning.¹⁸ According to Andrew Ortony, the new philosophical perspective, relativism, was instrumental in this change of perspective. According to relativism:

Cognition is the result of mental construction. Knowledge of reality, whether occasioned by perception, language, or memory, necessitates going beyond the information given. It arises through the interaction of that information with the context in which it is presented and with the knower's preexisting knowledge. In this kind of view—which provides no basis for a rigid differentiation between scientific language and other kinds—language, perception, and knowledge are inextricably intertwined.¹⁹

Once cognition was recognized as a mental function, this opened up new lines of inquiry into the connection between how people think and the context of those thoughts.

As thought process began to be explored in greater depth, metaphor recognition became a subject of increasing interest. I.A. Richards is most famous for professing that, “we cannot get through three sentences of ordinary fluid discourse without the use of metaphor.”²⁰ Richards called for a new rhetoric that he hoped would, “clarify the confusion inherited from the Lockean tradition ... He demonstrates convincingly that the so-called literal meaning is not equivalent to the meaning of the whole expression.”²¹ According to Richards, “when we use a metaphor we have two thoughts of different things active together and supported by a single word, or phrase, whose meaning is a resultant of their interaction.”²² He identified the two thoughts as the subject (he called the “tenor”) and the symbol (he called the “vehicle”). Max Black developed Richards’s insight that each metaphor has at least “two different networks of associations” by stressing the cognitive force involved in the metaphoric pro-

18 I.A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936). Max Black, *Models and Metaphors: Studies in Language and Philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962). Also see, Max Black, “More About Metaphor,” in *Metaphor and Thought* (ed. A. Ortony; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 19–41.

19 Andrew Ortony, “Metaphor, Language, and Thought,” in *Metaphor and Thought* (ed. A. Ortony; 2d ed; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 1. This anthology provides an excellent review of contemporary theories of metaphor.

20 Richards, *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 92.

21 Sage, “Metaphor in Literature,” 2459.

22 Richards, *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 93.

cess.²³ He also argued that a metaphor is more than an isolated term; it is a sentence that involves a “system of associated commonplaces.”²⁴ Black tried to illustrate that metaphors do not necessarily depict symbols that are already innately similar, but rather create associations based on a particular social context.²⁵ These two scholars unlocked the cognitive value of metaphor and their seminal works paved a path for metaphor studies across an array of disciplines, especially within social linguistics.

2 The Cognitive Approach to Metaphor

In 1980, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, expanding upon the theories of Richards and Black, shattered the traditional view that metaphor is used primarily as a figure of speech for ornamental device in their groundbreaking work *Metaphors We Live By*.²⁶ Instead, Lakoff and Johnson claimed that metaphor is a property of concepts, a tool to better understand certain concepts, and is used by people everyday not just by specially trained poets. According to Weiss, this cognitive approach “treats metaphor primarily as a figure of thought, as opposed to a figure of speech, and it examines the mental processes involved in the creation and interpretation of metaphor.”²⁷ This view espouses that metaphor should be considered an integral part of every day communication and is depicted as understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain.²⁸ Their seminal work opened new lines of inquiry into the relevance of metaphor studies and aimed to alter the negative reputation that it had ensued over the years.

For centuries, the prevailing distrust of metaphor was focused on a language level rather than on a thought level, which limited the use of metaphor within various disciplines. Lakoff and Johnson argue that the contradiction that exists within metaphor studies is a result of the failure of subjectivism and objectivism; “since the time of the Greeks, there has been in Western culture a tension between truth, on the one hand, and art, on the other, with art viewed

23 Cf. Janet Martin Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 49.

24 Black, *Models and Metaphors*, 39–40.

25 See Kittay, *Metaphor: Its Cognitive Force and Linguistic Structure*, 19.

26 See also, George Lakoff and Turner, *More than Cool Reason*.

27 Weiss, *Figurative Language in Biblical Prose*, 16.

28 For a more detailed analysis of conceptual domains, see Kövecses, *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction*, 4.

as illusion and allied, via its link with poetry and theater, to the tradition of persuasive public oratory.”²⁹ They proposed a synthesis of subjectivism and objectivism as an alternative:

Metaphor unites reason and imagination. Since the categories of our everyday thought are largely metaphorical and our everyday reasoning involves metaphorical entailments and inferences, ordinary rationality is therefore imaginative by its very nature.³⁰

This synthesis of subjectivism and objectivism they termed “imaginative rationality” and is considered an experientialist approach since, according to Kövecses, “truth is relative to our conceptual system, which is grounded in, and constantly tested by, our experiences and those of other members of our culture in our daily interactions with other people and with our physical and cultural environments.”³¹ Therefore, a deeper understanding of the cultural context of a particular metaphor should illuminate factors that led to its inception.

The transition from the study of language as purely linguistic to cognitive birthed a new field, cognitive linguistics:

Cognitive linguistics recognizes that the study of language is the study of language use and that when we engage in any language activity, we draw unconsciously on vast cognitive and cultural resources, call up models and frames, set up multiple connections, coordinate large arrays of information, and engage in creative mappings, transfers, and elaborations.³²

Metaphor Theory is the strand of cognitive linguistics launched by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in the early 1980s and has changed forever the way metaphor is viewed. Within ten years of the publishing of their seminal work on conceptual metaphor, over 500 books and articles were written on metaphor in a wide range of academic fields.³³ Their ideas have been instrumental in obliterating the shroud of negativity surrounding metaphor that have persisted for over two thousand years.

29 Lakoff and Turner, *More than Cool Reason* 189.

30 Ibid., 193.

31 Ibid., 193.

32 Gilles Fauconnier, “Cognitive Linguistics,” *Encyclopedia of Cognitive Science* (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2006).

33 See Jean-Pierre van Noppen and Edith Hols, *Metaphor 11: A Classified Bibliography of Publications 1985–1990* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamin’s Publishing Company, 1990).

3 Metaphor Theory and Biblical Studies

Biblical scholarship on metaphor has been greatly influenced by the philosophic trends of the last two millennia. Marc Zvi Brettler maintains that, “biblicists have shared philosophers’ distrust of metaphor.”³⁴ Even the recent shift to a more cognitive view of metaphor has largely been ignored by biblical scholarship. According to Andrea L. Weiss, “fundamental works such as *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* by G.B. Caird and *Classical Hebrew Poetry* by Wilfred Watson, provide rather traditional, word-based conceptions of metaphor involving the substitution of one term for another ... but do not expound upon the extant research on metaphor.”³⁵ The cognitive function of metaphor can be a useful tool for biblical studies, but has yet to be fully utilized.

Peter Macky wrote the first monolith-length study of biblical metaphor in 1990. He provides a basis theoretically for metaphor and specifies a definition of metaphor specific to biblical studies. Macky illuminates many distinct examples of metaphor from the Old and New Testaments, yet he spends little time unpacking these metaphorical expressions. His work has been instrumental, however, in featuring the importance of metaphor to biblical thought. Presently, biblical scholars are beginning to recognize that metaphor is a dominant characteristic of biblical thought and language.

More recently, David Aaron wrote a book entitled *Biblical Ambiguities: Metaphor, Semantics, and Divine Imagery*.³⁶ Aaron details a theory of metaphor called “conceptual ascription,” which attempts to delineate a third category in between the literal and the metaphorical. This study is highly theoretical, yet Aaron plots an innovative approach to metaphor. Aaron does not agree with George Lakoff, that we are built to think metaphorically. Instead, he conjures that metaphor is “a learned technique of discourse. One does not need to speak with metaphor.”³⁷ He also rejects many of Lakoff and Johnson’s theories because “by defining metaphors as an aspect of conceptual structure, the authors rob us of important tools for differentiating subtle nuances in language *usage*, as well as cognition.”³⁸ Aaron is especially concerned with

34 Brettler, *God Is King*, 26.

35 Weiss, *Figurative Language in Biblical Prose*, 21. See also, Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible*. Wilfred G.E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press Ltd., 1995).

36 David H. Aaron, *Biblical Ambiguities: Metaphor, Semantics, and Divine Imagery* (BRLAJ 4; Leiden: Brill, 2001).

37 Aaron, *Biblical Ambiguities*, 11.

38 *Ibid.*, 110.

semantics and he argues for a gradient approach to metaphor rather than the common pattern of “bifurcating language into metaphorical and non-metaphorical speech.”³⁹ His research focuses on divine imagery in general and not on one specific metaphor for the divine, but he does specify that, “the more we know about both literary and cultural context, the greater the diagnostic’s chance of yielding an unambiguous result.”⁴⁰ I do not agree with many of his assumptions, but I am convinced that knowledge about the cultural context is key to understanding figurative language in general.

Andrea Weiss’s work on metaphor is specific to the book of Samuel and concentrates on the linguistic aspects of figurative language rather than the “cognitive functioning that takes place when a person processes a metaphor.”⁴¹ She does provide an excellent summary of research on metaphor until 2006, but her emphasis is concerned with language and how certain figures of speech operate in the book of Samuel, rather than the origin and development of one metaphor specifically. Her line of thinking parallels David A. Aaron’s work, but she insists that her study also aims, “to explore the mechanics of metaphor and provide a means of identifying metaphors and distinguishing it from other forms of figurative language.”⁴²

Weiss endeavors to use the tools and concepts laid forth by contemporary metaphor theory and apply this to the biblical texts in an attempt to advance the understanding of metaphorical function in the Hebrew Bible.⁴³ She analyzes a series of metaphors found within the book of Samuel as the corpus of her study because she noticed that biblical scholars mainly focused on the poetic sections of the biblical text when looking at metaphor. Weiss investigates biblical prose sections of Samuel to show that metaphor was an aim of not only biblical poets, but biblical authors as well. Her work is not interested in cataloguing a specific metaphor, but rather looking at the complex relationship between several metaphors within a text. I found her section on “identifying biblical metaphors” the most helpful, but the focus of my study is the conceptual development of one metaphor rather than the linguistic development of several metaphors.

In July 2001, several biblical scholars gave papers on the topic of metaphor and the Hebrew Bible at the Society of Biblical Literature (International Meeting) in Rome, Italy. They compiled their work and published in 2005, *Metaphor*

39 Ibid., 110.

40 Ibid., 121.

41 Weiss, *Figurative Language in Biblical Prose*, 17.

42 Ibid., 32.

43 Ibid., 32.

in the *Hebrew Bible*, edited by Pierre van Hecke. Each chapter concentrates on a specific metaphor found in various passages throughout the Old Testament. This work highlights the growing interest in metaphor studies within the world of biblical scholarship.⁴⁴ This is not surprising given the recent innovations in metaphor research as well as the recognition that metaphor was one of the main tropes used by the biblical writers themselves to describe the abstract, in particular the divine.

Cognitive linguistics has become a useful resource in literature analysis in recent years. Since metaphor is a prevalent mode of communication in biblical literature, conceptual metaphor theory has become a beneficial method of interpretation in biblical studies as well. The goal of this study is to utilize metaphor theory as well as traditional biblical methods of interpretation, such as the material remains and comparative cultural evidence, to illuminate the development of one strain of biblical thought. The interplay between literary analysis, comparative textual evidence, and material culture can work in tandem to illustrate a more comprehensive picture of ancient Israelite society. In this way, metaphor theory can add another layer of information to our perception of the society that produced the biblical literature.

4 The Definition of Metaphor for This Study

There is not a consensus among scholars on a precise definition of “metaphor.” H.H. Lieb, a theoretical linguist, even claims to have found 125 different definitions! Traditionally, metaphor is defined as: “that figure of speech whereby we speak about one thing in terms which are seen to be suggestive of another.”⁴⁵ For the purposes of this study a cognitive linguistic view of metaphor will be utilized which recognizes that, according to George Lakoff and Mark Turner, “there exist basic conceptual metaphors for understanding life and death that are part of our culture and that we routinely use to make sense of the poetry of our culture.”⁴⁶ For instance, the English guide to metaphor acknowledges that the following two phrases: “he began *to reap the harvest* of his sound training” or, “this will make it difficult *to weed out* people unsuitable for the profession,”

44 Petra von Gemünden examined vegetation symbolism in the New Testament. She draws on some Hebrew Bible literature as well. See Petra von Gemünden, *Vegetationsmetaphorik im Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt. Eine Bildfelduntersuchung*. (NTOA 18; Freiburg/Göttingen: Universitätsverlag/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 50–92.

45 Soslke, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, 15.

46 Lakoff and Turner, *More than Cool Reason*, 15.

are two of numerous metaphors based on plant imagery.⁴⁷ Planting imagery in these instances is associated with a contemporary work environment, but they evoke images of agriculture.

Zoltan Kövecses argues that the PLANT metaphor is a complex metaphorical concept that can refer to “people, social organizations, scientific disciplines, economic and political systems, human relationships, sets of ideas and others.”⁴⁸ This metaphor is used quite frequently because the progression of a seed to a blossoming plant is an ecological process associated with everyday knowledge, particularly in predominantly agrarian societies.⁴⁹

Primary metaphors are often grouped together in particular cultures to form “complex” metaphors. For example, people are associated with plants in the primary metaphor PEOPLE ARE PLANTS. This metaphor is considered a cross-cultural primary metaphor because many ancient societies portrayed people as plants in their conceptual mappings. Even cave paintings from the Upper Paleolithic period portray this idea.⁵⁰ Within this broader metaphor, eighth century B.C.E. Hebrew literature depicts the complex metaphor YHWH IS THE VINTNER OF ISRAEL. This metaphor reflects a specific cultural understanding at a specific time, which bolsters the argument that metaphor theory is an important tool for cultural study. According to Kövecses, “complex metaphors are more important to cultural considerations. It is complex metaphors-not primary metaphors-with which people actually engage in their thought in real cultural contexts.”⁵¹ The ancient Israelites were keenly aware of their surroundings and so the physical environment as well as the social context, greatly influenced the metaphorical mappings.

The early poetic pieces found within the biblical text, such as the Song of the Sea, depict the Israelite God in specific metaphoric terms, which are often reflective of nature. Lieven Boeve and Kurt Feytaerts noticed that, “throughout the course of time most of the lexical categories (words) used for understanding God have not changed so that formally these images (metaphors)

47 Alice Deignan, *Collin Cobuild English Guides 7: Metaphor* (Seattle: Collins Cobuild, 1995).

48 Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 98.

49 According to Kövecses, “the natural and physical environment shapes a language, primarily its vocabulary, in an obvious way; consequently, it will shape the metaphor as well.” Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 187.

50 Steven Mithen, “A Creative Explosions? Theory of Mind, Language, and the Disembodied Mind of the Upper Paleolithic,” in *Creativity in Human Evolution and Prehistory* (ed. S. Mithen; Theoretical Archaeology Group; London/New York: Routledge, 1998), 125.

51 Zoltan Kövecses, *Metaphor in Culture: Universality and Variation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 11.

remain rather stable.”⁵² One of the main reasons Lakoff and Turner wrote their field guide to poetic metaphor was to show that poetic metaphor is powerful and should be included in the “domain of reason.” They argue that poets have a unique ability to use everyday thought and illuminate those thoughts through “the extension, composition, and criticism of the basic metaphorical tools through which we comprehend much of reality.”⁵³ These poets are speakers for a shared culture and a common memory. Therefore, as the social reality changes, the metaphorical representation of reality changes as well. Analysis of key poetic texts at pivotal junctions in the social and historical make-up of a society, can thus offer a glimpse of cultural identity just as clearly as prose texts.

In conclusion, this study will predominantly approach metaphor from a semantic level, rather than from the level of syntax. The primary tenet of cognitive semantic research is that conceptual systems are determined by an understanding and interaction with the world.⁵⁴ The way humans think is metaphorical and so the predominant metaphors of a culture are important to understanding cultural context. These metaphors constitute meaning and should be carefully examined because according to Lakoff, “once we learn a conceptual metaphor, it is just there, a ready and powerful tool.”⁵⁵ The conceptual metaphor YHWH IS THE PLANTER OF ISRAEL is the tool that this study seeks to analyze, from its early inception throughout biblical literature and some Second Temple texts. Even more specifically, the complex metaphor YHWH IS THE VINTNER OF ISRAEL will be examined within the planting imagery. This analysis also aims to investigate the cultural and social factors that sustained this metaphor throughout biblical history.

5 What This Study is Not

Even though “metaphor” is considered a category of literary analysis, this study will be grounded in the historical and cultural background of ancient Israel. Metaphor theory is the catalyst for an in-depth probe into the beliefs and customs of an ancient society. The goal of this study is not to examine each and

52 Lieven Boeve and Kurt Feyaerts, “Religious Metaphors in a Postmodern Culture: Transverse Links Between Apophatical Theology and Cognitive Semantics,” in *Metaphor and God-Talk* (ed. L. Boeve and K. Feyaerts; vol. 2; New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1999), 171.

53 Lakoff and Turner, *More Than Cool Reason*, 115.

54 Boeve and Feyaerts, “Religious Metaphors in a Postmodern Culture,” 175.

55 Lakoff and Turner, *More Than Cool Reason*, 62.

every metaphor for the divine, but only one in particular, the divine as planter of the people. Therefore, references to other metaphors for the divine will be limited.

There are several passages in the Hebrew Bible that portray rich garden imagery, such as the Creation Account and the poetic descriptions within the Song of Songs. This analysis is narrowly focused on YHWH as the planter of the people. Therefore, only instances where ancient Jewish texts actually mention God planting or uprooting will be analyzed (see Table 1). The Song of Songs depicts lush garden imagery, yet our metaphor is not apparent in this text. The Shulammitte woman is compared to a plant (4:13), but she is not physically planted, let alone planted by the divine. The Song does describe vineyards in some detail, so some of these references may be mentioned in chapters four and five of this study, since these chapters are concerned with depicting the importance of viticulture in ancient Israel.

Furthermore, the Song of Songs is difficult to date. According to Tremper Longman III, “observations of the language as well as the authorship of the book lead to an agnostic stand on the issue of date.”⁵⁶ Finally, the lyrical and often erotic poetry found within the Songs is unique to this particular book of the Hebrew Bible. Since authorship, date, and interpretation are so hotly debated this work will not analyze these poems in detail.

6 Conclusion

Metaphor was classified for two millennia as a literary device encouraging embellishment rather than truth. However, recent advances in cognitive linguistics have shown that people utilize metaphor as a way of conceptualizing the world. Metaphor does not occur primarily in language but in thought.⁵⁷ Therefore, analyzing a culture’s primary metaphors illuminates thought patterns within the social context.

The metaphor YHWH IS THE PLANTER OF THE PEOPLE illustrates one portrait of the divine/human relationship in biblical literature. There are dozens of passages depicting the people as plants and YHWH as the planter in the

⁵⁶ Most scholars date the Song of Songs late. See Tremper Longman III, *Song of Songs* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2001), 19. Also, Daniel C. Fredericks and Daniel J. Estes, *Ecclesiastes & Song of Songs* (Apollos OTC 16; Downer Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 271–273, for a more thorough discussion of the various debates regarding dating the Songs.

⁵⁷ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 3.

Hebrew Bible. The material world, horticulture in particular, is utilized as a source domain and the relationship between YHWH and the people is the target domain. However, the metaphor of the divine as a planter is not exclusive to ancient Israel. Chapter three will situate this metaphor in its cultural context: ancient Near Eastern storm-god imagery.

PART 1

*The Ancient Near Eastern Background
to the Divine as Planter of the People*



The Storm-God and Ancient Hebrew Poetry

At first glance, metaphor is a literary technique where one object or idea is compared to another object or idea. This is a rather simplistic view of metaphor, however, that does not take into account the conceptual framework behind the comparison. Often, the goal of metaphorical description is to shed light on abstract or complex situations. Therefore, physical realities and fundamental cultural concepts become the building blocks for the dominant metaphorical structures. According to Lakoff and Johnson, “the most fundamental values in a culture will be coherent with the metaphorical structure of the most fundamental concepts in the culture.”¹ In order to understand these fundamental values, an investigation of both the material culture and the surviving literature can work in tandem to highlight why particular metaphors are chosen. Peter Macky argues that this method works with biblical metaphor as well; “In the Bible the prototypical metaphors propose relatively better known symbols as ways to provide illumination of relatively more mysterious subjects.”² I would argue that while known physical symbols are the basis for most divine metaphors, these metaphorical mappings are more instrumental in revealing the influence of ancient Near Eastern mythology and topography on YHWH’s earliest persona rather than illuminating a ‘mysterious’ subject such as the divine.

This chapter will investigate how commonplace metaphors for YHWH in biblical literature reflect the ancient Near Eastern cultural milieu. YHWH’s portrayal as a warrior/storm-god was not a phenomenon of ancient Israel, but rather emerged from Mesopotamia with the spread of agriculture. The Israelite deity shares many affinities with storm-gods from contemporaneous cultures, ancient Canaanite traditions in particular. A brief survey of ancient Near Eastern storm-gods will highlight not only the commonalities, but the deviations as well.

The survey of the ancient Near Eastern storm-gods will be followed by an analysis of two early Hebrew poems (Psalm 29 and Exod 15:1–18), which depict YHWH as a storm-god. These hymns highlight the metaphorical portrayal of YHWH as a storm-god in control of the agricultural cycle as well as a divine

1 Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 22.

2 Macky, *Centrality of Metaphors to Biblical Thought*, 63.

warrior, conqueror of the forces of chaos. Furthermore, the central metaphor for this study YHWH IS THE PLANTER OF THE PEOPLE will be introduced in conjunction with the examination of the “Song of the Sea.” Thus, the main goals of this chapter are twofold. First, to investigate the cultural context behind the storm-god imagery discernible within early biblical texts. And secondly, to demonstrate that storm-god imagery is a dominant mode of thought in poetic texts, especially when depicting the divine.

1 The Biblical World: Some Observations

The discoveries of the Babylonian creation epic *Enuma Elish* in 1876 and the Ugaritic mythic texts in 1929 at Ras Shamra have illuminated a visible connection between ancient Israelite cosmogony and mythology and its Canaanite neighbors. The Ugaritic literary texts as well as many of the surviving literatures of ancient Mesopotamia are often written in a poetic form similar to the poetry found in the Hebrew Bible. Many of these cultures were not located in close proximity to ancient Israel, yet affinities between the literatures have been noticed.³ The depiction of storm-gods in Mesopotamian and Ugaritic literature indicate a common cultural milieu, which influenced the portrayal of YHWH as a storm-god in the biblical literature as well.

The archetypal metaphorical depictions of YHWH in the biblical text are comparable to traits of ancient Near Eastern warrior/storm-gods. In particular, YHWH exhibits many of the characteristics of Baal and El, the two leading deities in the Ugaritic pantheon. Patrick D. Miller, who has written extensively on the divine warrior in early Israel, argues:

There can be no doubt that in many respects the imagery associated with Yahweh is the same as that associated with Baal, particularly with regard to Yahweh as warrior. He battles as the storm god, riding or driving the clouds. He sends forth his voice and the enemies flee. He battles the monsters of the deep who represent death and chaos, as does Baal ... One may assume that the direct contact with Baalism from an early period strongly influenced the way Israel conceived its God ... Yahweh seems to have been strongly related to El. Part of the answer is to be seen in the

3 See Ronald S. Hendel, *The Epic of the Patriarch: The Jacob Cycle and the Narrative Traditions of Canaan and Israel* (HSM 42; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 46–48. Also see, O. Loretz, *Ugarit Und Die Bibel: Kanaanäische Götter Und Religion Im Alten Testament* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1990).

act that Baal and El shared certain characteristics, which must have been assimilated in the character of Yahweh.⁴

Early depictions of YHWH resemble a combination of the characteristics of these two prototypes, which became the basis for his narrative identity for millennia. Depictions of El and Baal are also enshrouded in metaphorical discourse reminiscent of the natural environment.

The influential study by Marjo Korpel, *A Rift in the Clouds: Ugaritic and Hebrew Descriptions of the Divine*, concluded that Ugaritic literature shares at least half of its metaphors for the divine with the Old Testament.⁵ These metaphors are often identical and are typically couched in a similar mythical language. According to Korpel, "Ugaritic myths offer a continuous narrative, like a modern film, whereas the biblical sources provide a series of glimpses, a handful of snapshots or frames; both derived from the same tradition of continuous narrative."⁶ In the biblical text, poetic hymns and poems describing the divine are often found within narrative or law sections. Their presence within particular narrative prose texts is often questioned. Therefore, examining the early poetry as individual snapshots is the key to noting the archetypical metaphors associated with the divine.

Korpel's investigation confirms that, "both in Ugarit and Israel metaphors describing the divine were used knowingly."⁷ These metaphors were chosen from human experiences in everyday life, such as the natural landscape, the ecological environment, and warfare. Since agriculture was the predominant means of sustenance of the population, the emergence of storm-gods coincided with an interest in rain to sustain the crops.

2 Ancient Near Eastern Storm-Gods: An Introduction

The storm-god became a recognizable figure in ancient Near Eastern iconographic and epigraphic sources as agriculture became the viable livelihood. The

4 Patrick D. Miller, *The Divine Warrior* (HSM 5; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 60. Ugaritic literature is often compared with biblical literature because of Israel's relative proximity to ancient Ugarit. Furthermore, the natural affinities between Baal and YHWH provide another point of correlation.

5 Korpel, *Rift in the Clouds*, 621.

6 Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 24.

7 Korpel, *Rift in the Clouds*, 631.

male deity as a gardener or cultivator emerged in ancient Mesopotamia with the rise of agricultural societies and male dominated rulers. Alberto Green, who has also contributed significantly to the emerging picture of storm-gods in the ancient Near East, noticed that in the early Neolithic period, “the overwhelming number of prehistoric figurines, frescoes, and other artifacts instead evolved around a ‘magna mater.’”⁸ As city-states emerged in the third millennium B.C.E., however, the male deity began to overshadow the goddess of fertility and eventually became associated with the male leader of the city.⁹ By the mid-third millennium, most of the gods have been identified and each city had its own god.¹⁰ The storm-god was thought to have direct control over the periodic rainfall, which directly impacted the harvest cycle.

Daniel Schwemer recently wrote a monograph on weather-god imagery, which has greatly contributed to an understanding of the historical background and literary material available on this topic.¹¹ According to Schwemer, “storm and tempest (along with thunder, clouds, rain, and wind) belong to those natural phenomena that cannot be influenced by human intervention and, at the same time, are of immediate significance in agrarian societies for the survival of humans.”¹² Storm or drought greatly affected the inhabitants that depended upon agriculture for survival. Therefore, the storm-god’s nature and subsequent attitude became intertwined with the success or failure of the agricultural cycle. Many of these storm-gods also shared common traits and attributes, reflective of the cultural interplay.

8 Alberto R.W. Green, *The Storm God in the Ancient Near East* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 72. Also, see Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddess: Women, Culture and the Biblical Transformation of Pagan Myth* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1992), 113 ff.

9 For a summary of the transition from fertility goddess to male deity leader, see Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddess: Women, Culture and the Biblical Transformation of Pagan Myth* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993), 58–69. Also, Gil Stein, “Economy, Ritual, and Power in ‘Ubaid Mesopotamia,’” in *Chiefdoms and Early States in the Near East: The Organizational Dynamics of Complexity* (ed. G. Stein and M.S. Rothman; Madison: Prehistory Press, 1994), 34–46.

10 See Green, *Storm God in the Ancient Near East*, 77.

11 Daniel Schwemer, *Die Wettergottgestalten Mesopotamiens und Nordsyriens im Zeitalter der Keilschriftkulturen: Materialien und Studien nach den schriftlichen Quellen* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 2001).

12 Daniel Schwemer, “The Storm-Gods in the Ancient Near East: Summary, Synthesis, Recent Studies, Part 1,” *JANER* 7 (2007): 129.

2.1 *Ancient Mesopotamian Storm-Gods: Enlil and Ishkur-Adad*

The storm-god Enlil was the patron deity of Nippur and this city was considered the most sacred city in southern Mesopotamia.¹³ Enlil is portrayed as both a violent warrior and a fatherly protector of all humans.¹⁴ Green maintains that the storm-god Enlil is found in written sources from the earliest known historical civilization of Mesopotamia.¹⁵ These textual sources as well as pictographic images tie this storm-god to the agricultural cycle.¹⁶

In pictographic sources of Sumero-Akkadian storm-gods, it is customary to find scenes such as a lion walking beside the deity, who guides a plough that is also drawn by two lions. Or, the dragon, a symbol of fertility, being guided by the deity as it turns up the furrow in preparing the fields for harvest. These symbols are descriptive of the ancient Sumerians' conception of Enlil in Early Dynastic I and II. In the emerging city-states, the emphasis was on subsistence and fertility, with a concentration on irrigation and agricultural concerns. The primary attribute of "Lord Storm" at this stage was providing fertility.¹⁷ Enlil guided the plough and subdued the floodwaters so that the irrigation of the plants could produce the yield necessary to feed the inhabitants. He was the provider and the protector of the people, but he was especially concerned with agriculture (see Figure 1).

In an Early Dynastic hymn, Enlil is upheld as the god who makes the vines grow:

O mighty one, you who hold the rains of heaven
And the waters of the earth,
Enlil, you who hold the halter of the gods (of nature),

13 See Green, *Storm God in the Ancient Near East*, 78. For more information regarding the importance of Nippur, see Samuel Noah Kramer, *The Sumerians* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 70, 153.

14 Green, *Storm God in the Ancient Near East*, 78. Also see Green's footnote #343.

15 Ibid., 34.

16 Schwemer does not agree with Green that Enlil should be considered a storm-god. According to Schwemer, "Enlil is associated with the abundant growth of grain and the space of air between heaven and earth ... There is, however, no reason to assume that these passages refer to Enlil's primary or cosmological role within the Sumerian pantheon." Schwemer, "Storm-Gods in the Ancient Near East, Part 1" 126. However, Schwemer does label Ishkur a storm-god and Enlil is considered his father. Since there is little agreement over this issue and Enlil is associated with the heavens, I have included Enlil as a storm-god for the purposes of this study.

17 Green, *Storm God in the Ancient Near East*, 79.



FIGURE 1 *Sumerian God of Vegetation. The deity is guiding the plow, which is drawn by a lion and a dragon. There are plants sprouting in the mountain behind him.*

PHOTO CREDIT: WWW.MESOPOTAMIANGODS.COM

Father Enlil, you are the one
Who makes the vines grow up.¹⁸

This ancient Mesopotamian storm-god controlled the amount of rain that fell, he determined the level of the floodwaters on the earth, and he was responsible for the germination of the land. In this way, Enlil became “the archetypal profile of every subsequent ancient Near Eastern storm-god.”¹⁹ For example, the Babylonian storm-god Ishkur-Adad is often depicted as a violent and devastating force as well as the sustainer of nature, similar to Enlil:

When the lord is raging, the heavens tremble.
At Ishkur’s wrath, the earth on its part also shakes.
The great mountains ... are all thrown down.²⁰

Decked with august fearful splendor,
Who with his whoop
Herds together the thick rain-clouds,

18 Translation taken from, Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Treasure of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 99.

19 Green, *Storm God in the Ancient Near East*, 41.

20 Translation taken from, S. Langdon, ed., *Babylonian Penitential Psalms* (Oxford Edition of Cuneiform Texts 6; Paris: Geuthner, 1927), 13, lines 18–19.

And causes the udder to bear copious milk,
Flooding the whole earth with plenty and abundance.²¹

Schwemer argues that the sources connected with Ishkur center around three motifs: “1) the destroyer who threatens fields and settlements with storm and flood, 2) the bringer of rain, who nurtures vegetation and fauna, 3) the young warrior who goes into battle on his chariot drawn by storm-demons for his father, An or Enlil, and lays waste to it.”²² Even though Enlil was associated more with agriculture than storm motifs, Ishkur embodied the typical characteristics of a storm-god and he is remembered as one who brought the rains.

The topography and sociopolitical circumstances may have altered the patron storm-gods appearance in various ways, but the overarching characteristics of the patron deity as a sustainer as well as a fierce destroyer of nature remain consistent within ancient Mesopotamian sources.²³ Since the agriculture in these regions relied mainly on rainfall, Schwemer argues that, “storm-gods ranked among the most prominent gods in the local panthea or were even regarded as divine kings, ruling over the gods and bestowing kingship on the human ruler.”²⁴ Ancient Mesopotamian storm-gods emerged out of the rise of agriculture as the mainstay of the populations and became associated with storm imagery.

2.2 *Ancient Syrian Storm-God: Hadad/Baal*

Hadad/Adad was the title of the great Semitic storm-god. He was the “creator of fertility, but by withholding moisture from the heavens he could also bring destruction to the land or, conversely, he could send devastating floods.”²⁵ Hammurabi’s code paints a telling picture of this early storm-god:

21 Translation taken from, William W. Doyle, “The Storm-God Ishkur-Adad: Texts and Studies” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1976), 132. Rim-Sin Inscription 2 UET I 145 (A).

22 Schwemer, “Storm-Gods in the Ancient Near East, Part I,” 134.

23 Enlil was the archetypal Mesopotamian storm-god. Other storm-gods from the region were usually associated with him somehow, often identified as his son. For example, Dagan, a storm-god of the Mari region and Middle Euphrates area, was closely associated with Enlil in the Sargonic Period. According to Green, these storm-gods, “were metaphorically conceptualized as the thundercloud personified. Mythopoeically conceived either as the divine protector or the harsh, arbitrary judge, politically, this divinity was the warrior-patron of the dominating powers in the region.” Green, *Storm God in the Ancient Near East*, 72.

24 Schwemer, “Storm-Gods in the Ancient Near East, Part I,” 121.

25 Green, *Storm God in the Ancient Near East*, 167.

May Adad, the lord of abundance,
 The irrigator of heaven and earth, my helper,
 Deprive him of the rains from heaven
 (And) the floodwaters from the springs!
 May he bring his land to destruction through want and hunger:
 May he thunder furiously over his city,
 And turn his land into the desolation of flood!²⁶

In this text, Hammurabi prays that Hadad will destroy the enemy by flooding and violent storm. Hadad is known to cause irrevocable damage, yet the storm-god is attributed as an aid to the king as well.

One of Hadad's more popular titles, Baal 'lord,' is well known from the Ugaritic Literature. According to Green, "the title *Baal* 'lord' aptly epitomized Hadad's supremacy in written sources starting in the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age; it was eventually used in place of *Hadad* in most regions of western Syria."²⁷ Baal was responsible for subduing the powers of Chaos, and according to the iconography, granting fertility to the fields (see Figure 2).²⁸ Also known as "the Rider of the Clouds," Baal was associated with nature and natural phenomena, as were many of the second tier deities in the Ugaritic divine council.²⁹ This led to various conflicts in the Ugaritic mythology, as feuding members of the pantheon struggled for power.³⁰

The climate in ancient Syria contributed to the power struggle apparent among the Ugaritic pantheon of gods. De Moor points out that climate was a key factor in this power struggle; "In contrast to Egypt and some parts of Mesopotamia, Canaan was totally dependent on rain for its agriculture and cattle-breeding. In this semi-arid region sufficient rainfall in the period from October through April was crucial to the sustenance of life."³¹ The region's reliance on a certain level of rainfall and the inherent fear of flooding destroy-

26 Theophile J. Meek, "The Code of Hammurabi," in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (ed. J.B. Pritchard; 2d ed.; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 179.

27 Green, *Storm God in the Ancient Near East*, 173.

28 See Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* (trans. T.J. Hallet; New York: Crossroads Publishing, 1985), 214.

29 Mark Smith analyzes the Ugaritic divine council as well as the particular role of Baal. See Smith, *Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 42–48.

30 Johannes C. de Moor, *The Rise of Yahwism: The Roots of Israelite Monotheism* (BETL 91; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1997), 79.

31 de Moor, *The Rise of Yahwism*, 78.



FIGURE 2

*Stela of the storm-god Baal (Louvre Museum). Notice the shaft of Baal. The upper end of the shaft ends in plant-like lines. Schwemer argues, "that this vegetal shaft-end has been interpreted as a symbol for the vegetation-furthering effect of the storm-god, as a 'tree-of-life,' as 'tree-weapon' or as a stylized lightning symbol."*³²

PHOTO CREDIT: RMN
GRAND PALAIS/ART
RESOURCE, NY

ing the vegetation, led to the rising importance of Baal as the storm-god par excellence of the region in contrast to the aging El.

In the Baal Myth, Baal defeats the god Yamm (Sea), but he is never able to completely destroy him, which perpetuates the ongoing fear of the raging

32 Daniel Schwemer, "Storm-Gods in the Ancient Near East: Summary, Synthesis, Recent Studies, Part II" *JANER* (2008): 36.

storms among the people of Ugarit.³³ De Moor concluded from the cyclical nature of this myth, “that the people of Ugarit continued to regard the monsters of Yammu as a daily threat to their life.”³⁴ Schwemer proposes that “the cyclical plot of the story suggests a seasonal interpretation,” which could coincide with the fall and spring festivals.³⁵ His theory deserves some merit considering Baal’s association with the agricultural cycle and the dependence of the people on rainfall for survival. Baal remained a powerful presence in the texts, but he never truly realized his ambition to become the storm-god and chief deity of his region.

3 Snapshots of the Divine in Early Hebrew Poetry

The diverse depictions of the divine in Hebrew poetry portray a varied landscape of mythological associations, most of which represent shared cultural motifs. Psalm 29 is a prime example of the storm-god imagery, which dominates many of these poetic texts. In this hymn, YHWH is portrayed as a storm-god comparable to the Canaanite god Baal:

Psalm 29:3–11

קול יהוה על־המים אל־הכבוד הרעים יהוה על־מים רבים:	3
קול־יהוה בכח קול יהוה בהדר:	4
קול יהוה שבר ארזים וישבר יהוה את־ארזי הלבנון:	5
וירקידם כמו־עגל לבנון ושרין כמו בן־ראמים:	6
קול־יהוה חצב להבות אש:	7
קול יהוה יחיל מדבר יחיל יהוה מדבר קדש:	8
קול יהוה יחולל אילות ויחשף יערות ובהיכלו כלו אמר כבוד:	9
יהוה למבול ישב וישב יהוה מלך לעולם:	10
יהוה עז לעמו יתן יהוה יברך את־עמו בשלום:	11

- 3 The voice of YHWH is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, YHWH, over mighty waters.
- 4 The voice of YHWH is powerful; the voice of YHWH is full of majesty.
- 5 The voice of YHWH breaks the cedars; YHWH breaks the cedars of Lebanon.

33 See KTU 1.2: IV.28 ff.

34 de Moor, *The Rise of Yahwism*, 89.

35 Schwemer, “Storm-Gods in the Ancient Near East, Part II,” 12.

- 6 He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, and Sirion like a young wild ox.
- 7 The voice of YHWH flashes forth flames of fire.
- 8 The voice of YHWH shakes the wilderness; YHWH shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.
- 9 The voice of YHWH causes the oaks to whirl, and strips the forest bare; and in his temple all say, "Glory!"
- 10 YHWH sits enthroned over the flood; YHWH sits enthroned as king forever.
- 11 May YHWH give strength to his people! May YHWH bless his people with peace!

According to this hymn, YHWH's voice sliced trees in half and lightening accompanied his speech. He is depicted as the god who sits 'enthroned' over the Yamm, never to be defeated. This is the early picture of the divine that emerges in biblical literature. Frank Moore Cross argues that the images of, "fire and light, smoke and shining cloud, thunder and quaking are all elements intimately bound together in the poetic descriptions of the theophany of the storm god, or the attack of the Divine Warrior."³⁶ The imagery associated with the storm-god and divine warrior is often interrelated. Green maintains that, "this piece of early Yahwistic poetry clearly identifies YHWH as a Storm-god fulfilling a mythical function parallel to that of Baal and other Near Eastern Storm-gods."³⁷ Psalm 29 is not the only text that portrays YHWH as a storm-god comparable to ancient Near Eastern storm-gods. Early Hebrew poetry consistently reflects typological storm-god characteristics encroached in mythical language (see Appendix 1 for a supplemental list of storm-god/warrior metaphors commonly attributed to YHWH found in early Hebrew poems: Judg 5; Deut 32; Hab 3).

According to Mark S. Smith, "while old myths were commonly readopted in Ancient Israel, new myths were rarely created."³⁸ Therefore, the mythic material found in the Hebrew Bible played a pivotal role in the formation of the ancient Israelite society. Myths of the divine's narrative identity are most frequently found in the early poetry.³⁹ Smith utilized the Ugaritic Baal Cycle as a standard to determine several passages of mythic material in biblical

³⁶ Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 169.

³⁷ Green, *Storm God in the Ancient Near East*, 263–264.

³⁸ Smith, *Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 23.

³⁹ According to Smith, "all scholars agree that the Baal Cycle is 'myth,' and biblical material using divine imagery comparable to divine imagery from the Baal Cycle may be characterized as 'mythic material.'" *Ibid.*, 23.

literature.⁴⁰ For the purposes of this study, the Song of the Sea is an early myth that mentions the metaphor of the divine as the planter of the people. This hymn represents a nascent form of ancient Israelite religious thought and is typically considered early Hebrew poetry due to content, affinities to other ancient Near Eastern poetry, and archaisms.⁴¹

According to the biblical text, this song was song by Moses and the Israelites to celebrate the victory of YHWH over Pharaoh and his army at the sea.⁴² Based on the archaic language and parallels to Ugaritic poetry, Frank Moore Cross argues for a late twelfth or even early eleventh century B.C.E. composition.⁴³ Many scholars have examined this poem and have argued for various dates, but the general consensus is that this is one of the oldest sections of the Hebrew

40 Ibid., 23, for a full listing of what Smith classifies as “myth” in the Hebrew Bible.

41 Psalm 29, Exodus 15:1–18, Judges 5, Deuteronomy 32, and Habakkuk 3 are not a comprehensive list of early Hebrew poetry, but merely a selective few. For further information about early Hebrew poetry, see David A. Robertson, *Linguistic Evidence in Dating Early Hebrew Poetry* (Missoula: Society of Biblical Literature, 1972). Robertson was the first to date many of these poems. Also see, Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques*.

42 For a current anthology of the research done on the Exodus tradition, see Stephen C. Russell, *Images of Egypt in Early Biblical Literature: Cisjordan-Israelite, Transjordan-Israelite, and Judahite Portrayals* (Berline: de Gruyter, 2009), 1–14. He argues for over 160 references to the exodus in biblical literature.

43 See Frank M. Cross, Jr. and David N. Freedman, “The Song of Miriam,” *JNES* 14 (1955): 237–250, for a detailed analysis of the archaic language in the song and how this vocabulary pertains to the Late Bronze Age. Also, Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 124. The most thorough linguistic study of this text was done by Robertson, *Linguistic Evidence in Dating Early Hebrew Poetry*, 153–156. See further, David N. Freedman, “Strophe and Meter in Exodus 15,” in *A Light Unto My Path: Old Testament Studies in Honor of Jacob M. Meyers* (ed. H.N. Bream et al.; Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1974). Trent C. Butler lists forty-eight proposals for the date of the song in, “The Song of the Sea’: Exodus 15:1–18: A Study in the Exegesis of Hebrew Poetry (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1971), 57–58. I have listed some of these proposals, but have updated the scholarship until present day using a summary by Russell in, *Images of Egypt in Early Biblical Literature*, 133–138. Some of these proposals include an early date due to comparison with Ugaritic Poetry of the 12th century B.C.E. (Frank M. Cross, William F. Albright, Brian D. Russell), Pre-monarchic (Baruch Halpern), Early Monarchy (Sigmund Mowinckel, Samuel E. Loewenstamm, Ronald E. Clements, Carol L. Meyers), language affinities with the major prophets of the late pre-exilic period (Jasper J. Burden), various themes and language in the song are a product of the Deuteronomist (Raymond J. Tournay), or possibly a late date (Alan H. McNeile, Martin Brenner, Rudiger Bartelmus).

Bible. In this song, YHWH is depicted as a warrior (vs. 3), a storm-god (vs. 1, 4–10), a deliverer (vs. 1–2, 13), and a planter of the people (vs. 17). These are some of the earliest images of the divine and so it is not surprising that other early poems draw on many of these same themes.

Exodus 15:1–18

- 1 אז ישיר־משה ובני ישראל את־השירה הזאת ליהוה ויאמרו לאמר אשירה
ליהוה כִּי־גָאָה גָאָה סוֹס וּרְכָבוֹ רָמָה בַּיָּם:
- 2 עֲזִי וְזִמְרַתִּי יְהוָה וְיִהְיֶה לִּישׁוּעָה זֶה אֱלֹהֵי וַאֲנוּהוּ אֱלֹהֵי אֲבִי וְאַרְמְמָנָהוּ:
- 3 יְהוָה אִישׁ מִלְחָמָה יְהוָה שְׁמוֹ:
- 4 מִרְכַּבֹּת פָּרָעָה וְחִילוֹ יִרְהוּ בַיָּם וּמִבְּחַר שְׁלִשִּׁי טָבְעוּ בַיָּם־סוֹף:
- 5 תִּהְיֶינָה יָכְסִימוּ וִירְדוּ בַּמַּצּוֹלֹת כְּמו־אֲבָן:
- 6 יִמְיֹנֶךָ יְהוָה נֹאדְרֵי בִכְחַיִּימֶיךָ יְהוָה תִּרְעֹץ אוֹיֵב:
- 7 וּבִרְבִּי גִּאֲוֹנֶךָ תִּהְרַס קִמְיֶךָ תִּשְׁלַח חֲרֹנֶךָ יֵאָכְלֻמוּ כֶּקֶשׁ:
- 8 וּבִירוּחַ אַפִּיךָ נִעְרְמוּ מִיָּם נִצְבּוּ כְּמו־נֶגֶד נִזְלִים קָפְאוּ תִּהְיֶינָה בַּלְבָּיִם:
- 9 אָמַר אוֹיֵב אֲרֹדְךָ אֲשִׁיג אֲחִלְק שְׁלָל תִּמְלָאֲמוּ נַפְשֵׁי אֲרִיק חֲרָבִי תִּוְרִישְׁמוּ
יָדִי:
- 10 נִשְׁפַּת בְּרוּחְךָ כִּסְמוּ יָם צָלְלוּ כַּעֲוֹפֶרֶת בַּמַּיִם אֲדִירִים:
- 11 מִי־כִמְכָּה בָּאֵלִים יְהוָה מִי כִמְכָּה נֹאדֵר בַּקֹּדֶשׁ נוֹרָא תִּהְלֹת עֲשֵׂה פֶלֶא:
- 12 נִטִּית יִמִּינְךָ תִּבְלַעְמוּ אֶרֶץ:
- 13 נָחִית בַּחֲסֹדֶךָ עֲסִיזוּ גֵּאֻלֹּת נִהְלֹת בַּעֲזֹךָ אֶל־נוֹה קִדְשֶׁךָ:
- 14 שָׁמְעוּ עַמִּים יִרְגְּזוּ חֵיל אַחֲזִי יִשְׁבִּי פִלְשֶׁת:
- 15 אֲזָנְבָהֻּ אֶלּוּפֵי אֲדוֹם אֵילֵי מוֹאָב יֵאֲחֲזֻמוּ רַעַד נִמְגּוּ כָל יֹשְׁבֵי כְנָעַן:
- 16 תִּפֹּל עֲלֵיהֶם אֵימָתָהּ וּפָחַד בְּגֹדֶל זִרְעֶךָ יִדְמוּ כִּאֲבָן עַד־יַעֲבֹר עִמָּךָ יְהוָה
עַד־יַעֲבֹר עֲסִיזוּ קִנִּית:
- 17 תִּבְאֲמוּ וְתִטְעֲמוּ בַּחַר נִחְלָתְךָ מִכּוֹן לִשְׁבַתְךָ פַּעֲלָת יְהוָה מִקְדָּשׁ אֲדָנִי כּוֹנֵן
יָדִיךָ:
- 18 יְהוָה יִמְלֹךְ לְעֹלָם וָעֶד:

- 1 Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to YHWH: I will sing to YHWH, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea.
- 2 YHWH is my strength and my might, and he has become my salvation; this is my God and I will exalt him.
- 3 YHWH is a warrior; YHWH is his name.
- 4 Pharaoh's chariots and his army he cast into the sea; his picked officers were sunk in the Red Sea.
- 5 The floods covered them; they went down into the depths like a stone.

- 6 Your right hand, O YHWH, glorious in power-your right hand, O YHWH, shattered the enemy.
- 7 In the greatness of your majesty you overthrew your adversaries; you set out your fury, it consumed them like stubble.
- 8 At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up, the floods stood up in a heap; the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea.
- 9 The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, my desire shall have its fill of them. I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.'¹⁰ You blew with your wind, the sea covered them; they sank like lead in the mighty waters.
- 11 Who is like you, O YHWH, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in splendor, doing wonders?
- 12 You stretched out your right hand, the earth swallowed them.
- 13 In your steadfast love you led the people whom you redeemed; you guided them by your strength to your holy abode.
- 14 The peoples heard, they trembled; pangs seized the inhabitants of Philistia.
- 15 Then the chiefs of Edom were dismayed; trembling seized the leaders of Moab; all the inhabitants of Canaan melted away.
- 16 Terror and dread fell upon them; by the might of your arm, they became still as a stone until your people, O YHWH, passed by, until the people whom you acquired passed by.
- 17 **You brought them in and planted them on the mountain of your possession, the place, O YHWH, that you made your abode, the sanctuary, O YHWH, that your hands have established.**
- 18 YHWH will reign forever and ever.

The song's early dating is further supported by its comparison with other ancient Near Eastern mythic texts. Bernard F. Batto argues that Exodus 15 exhibits, "the same basic structure as *Enuma Elish* and the Ugaritic Baal Cycle. The Divine Warrior overcomes his watery foe of chaos, creating a new order in the process ... The Divine Warrior then retires to his mountain sanctuary, from where he eternally rules his newly ordered cosmos."⁴⁴ William H.C. Propp notes that the overall structure of Exod 15:1b–18, "mirrors cosmic architecture. The Song begins in the Sea's depth (vv. 1–10), where Yahweh's drowned enemies lie in the underworld (v. 12). It ends on a mountaintop sanctum, from which

44 Bernard F. Batto, *Slaying the Dragon: Mythmaking in the Biblical Tradition* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 113.

Yahweh reigns forever.”⁴⁵ Yahweh’s victory over the Sea (Yamm) is monumental to the identity of a people with Mesopotamian roots.

In the late second millennium B.C.E. scribal schools were prominent throughout Mesopotamia and the transmission of various creation myths would have been accessible to surrounding areas.⁴⁶ The ancient Israelites were aware of these mythic prototypes and so YHWH inherited many of these same attributes. Just as Baal desired to build a temple once he defeated Yamm, so too YHWH speaks of his sanctuary upon defeat of Pharaoh and the Sea. The themes incorporated in this song are ancient and clearly resonate the borrowing of specific motifs from other Mesopotamian cultures. Michael Fishbane divides ancient Near Eastern mythic prototypes into two thematic categories:

The first of these features involves reference to a paradigmatic divine action—specifically, to a divine battle (theomachy) against the sea (as a natural and often personified element), adduced or evoked in conjunction with the origin of the world or subsequent acts of divine power. The second focuses on the divine personalities themselves, who provide sustenance, protection, or military assistance to their faithful human subjects, and who may be coaxed and praised for these benefits—but who may also withdraw their favour or abandon their worshippers or shrines in moments of wrath. If the sea battle is one of the most common and dramatic mythologems in ancient Near Eastern literature, the relationship between worshippers and their gods has been identified as a common religious pattern throughout the region.⁴⁷

The Song of the Sea incorporates both thematic elements: the divine battle as well as the divine relationship. After the warrior subdued the Yamm, he chose a specific group of people and ‘planted’ them on his mountainous residence (v. 17). Horticulture metaphors are one of the dominant metaphors for the divine/human relationship in the Hebrew Literature. The people as plants/vines will be the focus of the subsequent five chapters. However, it is

45 William H.C. Propp, *Exodus 1–18: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 571.

46 For evidence of Canaanite scribal schools in the second millennium B.C.E., see Aaron Demsky, “The Education of Canaanite Scribes in the Mesopotamian Cuneiform Tradition,” in *Bar-Ilan Studies in Assyriology* (ed. J. Klein and A. Skaist; Jerusalem: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1990), 157–170.

47 Fishbane, *Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking*, 32–33.

noteworthy that the Song of the Sea reflects two of the arching themes of ancient Near Eastern literature.

Not only is the thematic structure of this song similar to ancient Near Eastern texts, but the language can also be attributed to early Canaanite poetry. Frank Moore Cross and David Noel Freedman have argued that the “language of Exodus 15 is more consistently archaic than that of any other prose or poetic work of some length in the Bible. The poem conforms throughout to the prosodic patterns and canons of the Late Bronze Age.”⁴⁸ Numerous studies have examined the language, parallelism, and mixed meter of this song.⁴⁹ It has been compared to poetry throughout the Hebrew Bible and likened to poetry throughout Mesopotamia. There are many archaisms in this poetical unit and so the song is typically compared with the poetry of the Baal myth of the eleventh century B.C.E. A precise date for this song may never be known, but it is suffice to say that the archaisms in the text point to an early date.

Due to the highly significant content of this composition, the Song of the Sea became a collective memory for the Israelite community. This piece of literature became one of the, “quintessential expressions of the community’s traditional story,” which is to say, it became an “authentic myth” for the Israelite community.⁵⁰ The song’s importance resonates throughout the Hebrew Bible due to its importance as a foundational mode of discourse for the people. Alan Confino argues that the song functions as, “an exploration of a shared identity that unites a social group, be it a family or a nation, whose members nonetheless have different interests and motivations.”⁵¹ This is a song of commemoration, but more importantly, it serves as a collective memory of a merging nation. Allusions to the song can be found throughout the Hebrew Bible because it served as a source of identity to a group of tribes aiming to unite under a shared faith.⁵²

For the purposes of this study, the song’s reference to the divine as a planter of the people (v. 17) will be examined as a motif in biblical literature. The storm-god YHWH was in control of the rainfall, the floodwaters, and plant life.

48 See Cross and Freedman, “The Song of Miriam,” for a detailed analysis of the archaic language in the song and how this vocabulary pertains to the Late Bronze Age.

49 Cf. Robertson, *Linguistic Evidence in Dating Early Hebrew Poetry*, 153–156. See also, Freedman, “Strophe and Meter in Exodus 15,” 163–205.

50 Batto, *Slaying the Dragon*, 16.

51 Alon Confino, “Memory and the History of Mentalities,” in *Cultural Memory Studies: An Interdisciplinary Handbook* (ed. A. Erll and A. Nünning; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co., 2008), 81.

52 Cf. 2 Sam 7:10; Pss 77:13–20; Isa 51:10.

Yet, he was also associated metaphorically as the planter of the people. Many ancient Near Eastern traditions depict the divine metaphorically as a planter of the people (see chapter 4, heading 3). In the Hebrew Bible, the Israelite people become associated with plant imagery, vine imagery in particular. Exodus 15:17 is one of the earliest known references to this metaphorical depiction in the biblical literature. The image of the people as YHWH's choice planting becomes a portraiture of the divine/human relationship throughout much of prophetic literature. The predominantly agrarian setting of the Fertile Crescent contributed to the development of this particular metaphor, which was inherited and developed by biblical authors in their own literature.

4 Conclusion

Ancient Near Eastern mythical texts depict deities in language cased in localized metaphors from the natural landscape. Since agriculture became the mainstay of these civilizations by the third millennium B.C.E., powerful storm-gods emerged as the representatives of the abundant harvest and the destructive storms. In many early Hebrew poems, the language of the theophany of the divine warrior and the theophany of the divine storm-god exhibit similar mythical language.⁵³ YHWH evolved as a warrior and storm-god, an avenger and a planter. Psalm 29 and Exodus 15 (see also Appendix 1) are early texts that characterize YHWH as both a divine warrior and a storm-god. These images became the basis for YHWH's characterization in the biblical text and so it is hardly surprising that many of these metaphors are reiterated throughout the Hebrew Bible. As a storm-god he was responsible for the fructification of nature and as a divine warrior he was responsible for keeping chaotic forces at bay. In this way, YHWH became "the consummate mythical storm-god warrior."⁵⁴

The main focus of this study is to examine one aspect of this storm-god warrior: as planter of the people. The Hebrew Bible is saturated with horticulture metaphors, where YHWH is the planter and the people are the plants/vines. Just as early poetry portrays the divine as both a storm-god and warrior, the planting metaphor follows a similar pattern. As a storm-god, YHWH is the skilled gardener who plants and cultivates a choice vine, his chosen people. As a warrior, he is the up-rooter and destroyer of his choice planting. Interestingly, the history of ancient Israel and planting metaphors move along parallel trajecto-

53 See Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 86.

54 Green, *Storm God in the Ancient Near East*, 265.

ries. When the people have divine favor they are a luxuriant plant. When YHWH is displeased with the people, however, their fate is turned over to the wrath of the divine warrior. Thus, the mythological features associating YHWH with the storm-god and divine warrior, persists in the metaphorical discourse.

The plant metaphor resonates throughout biblical literature, yet it is not a motif found in the Bible alone. After surveying ancient Near Eastern literature, there is also a clear association between storm-gods and plant imagery. Some cosmogonic myths from the Sumerian and Persian cultures even depict the autochthonous origin people. An analysis of these sources will provide the background for the biblical concept of the nation of Israel as a plant and YHWH as the planter.

Gods Planting People: A Survey

The ancient Israelites were part of a cultural climate that acknowledged the divine's presence in nature. The reliance on agriculture for survival facilitated the emergence of powerful storm-gods across ancient Mesopotamia, which influenced the persona of the Hebrew god, YHWH. The amount of rainfall determined the success or failure of the yearly harvest. Depictions of storm-gods and their attributes materialized in the iconographic and literary sources in response to these agrarian concerns.

Metaphors are conceived from familiar objects, such as the natural environment or daily experiences. The cognitive linguist, Raymond Gibbs Jr. argues that, "an understanding of the social context is crucial to understanding the development of a literary metaphor."¹ Therefore, the recognition that horticultural crop production was the activity that consumed most peoples' waking hours in ancient society is essential to understanding the metaphor YHWH IS THE PLANTER OF THE PEOPLE.

This chapter will discuss the relationship between divinity and plant imagery. Near Eastern mythological texts chronicle many of the activities and interests of the patron deities. These gods typically lived in temples on cosmic mountains, which contained lavish gardens. The iconographic sources confirm that agricultural concerns were part of their varied repertoire. The close affinity between the agricultural calendar and divine favor led to the metaphorical depiction of the deity as a planter of not only plants, but people as well. Several Sumerian, Ugaritic, and Persian creation stories depict the evolution of man comparable to plant growth, a seed sprouting from the earth. Furthermore, the image of YHWH as the planter and the people as the plant becomes a vivid image in biblical literature. This chapter will discuss the development of divine planting imagery in the ancient Near Eastern and biblical literature, with an emphasis on the metaphorical depiction of the people as plants.

1 Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr., "The Process of Understanding Literary Metaphor," *JLS* 19 (1990): 71.



FIGURE 3 *Ur-Nammu Stela; Mesopotamia, Ur ca. 2097–2080 (University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology), Philadelphia. The Sumerian Ruler and a deity are pictured here watering a plant.*

PHOTO CREDIT: BPK BILDAGENTUR/ART RESOURCE, NY

1 Storm-Gods and Plant Imagery

The notion of divinity associated with planting, notably a tree, is not foreign to Near Eastern iconography. For example, in a list of ancient Babylonian gods, Marduk is ascribed as a god of planting, as well as being given other attributes.² His traditional symbol was ‘the spade,’ so it is likely that he was associated with agriculture.³ Furthermore, scenes depicting gods watering plants or self-pollinating are another noticeable aspect of near eastern art.

According to Pauline Albenda, “the desire for fertility and growth of crops in the land is most probably the meaning behind the watering of small potted trees by such early Mesopotamian rulers as Ur-Nammu, who is shown perform-

2 Cf. Wilfred G. Lambert, “The Historical Development of the Mesopotamian Pantheon: A Study in Sophisticated Polytheism,” in *Unity and Diversity: Essays in the History, Literature, Religion of the Ancient Near East* (ed. H. Goedicke and J.J.M. Roberts; Baltimore/London: John Hopkins University, 1975), 191–200. The translation can be found on pages 197–198.

3 Schwemer, “The Storm-Gods in the Ancient Near East: Part I,” 128.



FIGURE 4 Winged, bird-headed deities and tree image (King Assurnasirpal II's Palace).

ing the ritual before enthroned deities on his stele" (see Figure 3).⁴ The watering of plants and sacred trees by deities have survived in various forms in the iconographic evidence and contribute to the textual sources depicting various gods as inherently interested in agriculture.

The "tree scene" in Assyrian art was a significant motif, especially among wall carvings from the palace of King Assurnasirpal II (ca. 867 B.C.E.).⁵ After surveying King Assurnasirpal II's palace, Barbara Porter concluded that numerous scenes depict "two winged figures, sometimes with birds' heads and sometimes with the heads of men and the horned hats of god. Each of the winged figures holds a bucket and reaches out with an oval object toward a stylized tree-like object between them" (see Figure 4).⁶

Scholars have argued for various interpretations of these scenes and there are still debates regarding which species of tree these images represent, but there is a general consensus that these scenes depict a cultic fertility rite of some sort. Barbara Porter argues:

4 Albenda, "Grapevines in Ashurbanipal's Garden," 14.

5 The tree scene was depicted ninety-six times in Room I of the palace and countless other times in seals and other wall carvings. See Barbara Fleuling Porter, *Trees, Kings, and Politics: Studies in Assyrian Iconography* (OBO 197; Fribourg: Academic, 2003), 11–20, for a detailed analysis of the tree scene motif in Assyrian art.

6 Ibid., 24.

This scene, for all its links to real agriculture, is in its essence an emblem, representing the gods' gift to mankind of abundant crops and, by extension, of the security agricultural success provides. When the winged figure reaches out with his oval flower cluster toward the figure of the king, he is thus not literally pollinating the king but rather, metaphorically bestowing on him abundance and security as a gift from the gods—a meaning that would have been easily grasped from the picture because it represented an agricultural process whose consequences were well understood.⁷

With the gods' help, the Assyrian king was able to provide abundance to his people. The scene depicted above would have been the first thing a visitor would have seen who visited the throne room and pictures of the tree scene were found all over the palace walls. The winged divine creatures are not ordinary farmers, but rather hand pollinated the tree to ensure the success of the agricultural cycle of the Assyrian people. The Assyrian gods and the king himself clearly played a prominent role in the success of the agricultural cycle and the success of the land.

There are also a few iconographic sources that depict the deity enshrouded in a plant and not merely pollinating or watering a plant. For example, the deity *Santas* is carved into the hillside at Ivriz in the Taurus Mountains with large vines twisted around his torso and he holds ears of grain in his outstretched hands. There are also streams of water flowing from his hands. A contemporary of Tiglath Pileser III (744–727 B.C.E.), King Urballa of Tyana stands next to the deity with both hands upraised in the traditional Anatolian gesture of prayer. Iconographic representations of Near Eastern gods rarely portray grape vines, especially in a religious context such as this one. Interestingly, viticulture is thought to have originated in Anatolia, so the use of grape vines may reflect that predominance of viticulture in this area (see chapter 5, heading 2). According to Pauline Albenda, this deity decorated with thriving plants, “reflects a later version of fertility gods depicted in the Near East as early as the third millennium B.C.E., during the Akkad Dynasty.”⁸ The increasing interest in viticulture in the first millennium B.C.E. may have contributed to the use of vines and grape clusters on this stela.

The textual evidence shows a direct link between the deities and storm-gods in particular, and control over agriculture. These gods were believed to have great influence over the agricultural cycle and the climate of their respective

⁷ Ibid., 16–17.

⁸ Albenda, “Grapevines in Ashurbanipal’s Garden,” 10.

areas. The iconographic evidence supplants the textual evidence and confirms this motif in ancient thought. Thus, iconographic studies can be another useful tool in metaphor interpretation. The representation of Baal with a plant-like spear or Near Eastern gods watering plants becomes a material image of the planting metaphor. According to Martin Klingbeil, “verbal, mental, and material images are sub-domains that draw from the same domain ... literary and literal image can rightfully be related to each other.”⁹ In this way, iconographic imagery and textual metaphor can work simultaneously to illuminate ancient thought and ideology.

2 Ancient Near Eastern Temple Gardens

Not only were several ancient Near Eastern deities associated with land cultivation, but their temples were often accompanied by lavish gardens as well.¹⁰ Stephanie Dalley argues that, “the Babylonians and Assyrians planted gardens in cities, palace courtyards, and temples, in which trees with fragrance and edible fruits were prominent for re-creating their concept of Paradise.”¹¹ The primary early references to cultic or holy gardens in Babylonia are to, “Inanna taking the *huluppu-tree*” to her temple garden in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*.¹² Also in the Gilgamesh tradition, the cedar forest of Lebanon is referred to as a divine abode, the god’s plantation.¹³ In Egypt, the Helipolitan sun temple was landscaped.

Sennacherib imported plants into his garden at his palace at Nineveh. He planted this garden on a hill and he used local and imported plants.¹⁴ He also built a temple at Assur within a garden setting and made this the location of the New Year Festival. Stephanie Dalley argues that Sennacherib’s garden “may

9 Martin G. Klingbeil, “Mapping the Literary to the Literal Image: A Comparison Between Sub-Metaphors of the Heavenly Warrior Metaphor in the Hebrew Psalter and Iconographic Elements of the Storm-God and Warrior-God Ba’al in ANE Iconography,” *Die Welt Des Orients* 39 (2009): 205–222.

10 For an exhaustive analysis of the significance of gardens in the ancient Near East, see Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden*, 81–161.

11 Stephanie Dalley, “Ancient Mesopotamian Gardens and the Identification of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon Resolved,” *GH* 21 (1993): 1.

12 See A. Shafer, “Sumerian Sources of Tablet XI of the Epic of Gilgamesh” (Ph.D. diss., The University of Pennsylvania, 1963), 30.

13 Cf. Fritz Stoltz, “Die Baume des Gottesgartens auf dem Libanon,” *ZAW* 84 (1972): 149–153.

14 See Albenda, “Grapevines in Ashurbanipal’s Garden,” 6.

have been the place where the king, representing the god, performed the ritual marriage ceremony with a priestess.”¹⁵ Dalley postulates that because we have evidence of love lyrics depicting love making within gardens, that this ritual ceremony could have also taken place in Sennacherib’s garden. For instance, the lyrics of Nabu (god of wisdom) and his spouse, Tashmetu, describe a lovemaking scene within a garden:

Let me go into the garden, into the garden to my lord. May my eyes see the plucking of your fruit, may my ears hear the song of your birds ... Bind your days to the garden and to the Lord! Bind your nights to the beautiful garden.¹⁶

Autumn was the traditional time of vineyard festivals and wedding celebrations. The grape harvest initiated these festivities and so it is also plausible that the king performed a ritual marriage ceremony at this time as well.

The remains of elaborate gardens have been excavated in Syro-Palestine as well and the biblical literature echoes many of these findings. For example, king Solomon mentions his gardens and vineyards in Eccl 2:4–6. According to the book of Nehemiah, the King’s garden was located close to the city gates (Neh 3:15), but not within the temple complex. The association of a garden with a temple is depicted negatively in ancient Israel, probably due to its association with fertility rites (Isa 1:29; 65:3; 66:17).¹⁷ Even though there may not have been gardens within the temple complex at Jerusalem, the temple itself was decorated with images of palm trees, gourds, and open flowers (1 Kgs 6:18, 29). Carvings of the natural world were carved on the walls of the temple and even the inner sanctuary was decorated with beautiful open flowers and palm trees. Images from the plant world served as the décor for YHWH’s dwelling creating a garden-like oasis.

Gardens were a significant aspect of ancient Near East monumental architecture. Furthermore, gardens and planting imagery were prominent features of the temple architecture and the cultic role of the gods as well. Exod 15:17 mentions that YHWH planted his people on “the mountain of your own possession.” The association of gods with mountain sanctuaries is especially common

¹⁵ Dalley, “Ancient Mesopotamian Gardens,” 6.

¹⁶ Translation taken from Alasgair Livingstone, *Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea* (State Archives of Assyria III; Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1987), no. 16 (SU 52/233).

¹⁷ Cf. D.J. Wiseman, “Mesopotamian Gardens,” *AS* 33, Special Number in Honor of the Seventy-Fifth Birthday of Dr. Richard Barnett (1983): 143.

among those known as storm-gods (see Appendix 2 for an analysis of the Cosmic Mountain). It was from these mountain sanctuaries that the storm-god orchestrated the agricultural cycle and according to some traditions, planted the people like the grass of the fields.

3 Ancient Near Eastern Descriptions of Gods “Planting” People

The iconographic and textual evidence from the ancient Near East clearly depicts a correlation between divinity and the agricultural cycle. In particular, storm-gods were known for their involvement in agriculture production and control over the level of winter rains. These gods planted lush gardens and subdued the waters of chaos, but some were also depicted metaphorically as planters of the people. For example, Sumerian and Persian creation myths describe the autochthonous origin of mankind. There are also a few passages in biblical literature that illustrate man’s origins as sprouting from the earth.

3.1 *Sumerian Literature*

The Sumerian literature describes two different versions of the creation of humanity. In one account, man is created from clay, which is adopted in Akkadian literature as well. This creation story becomes the dominant image of people’s origins in most ancient Near Eastern cultures. The creation of man from clay is also preserved in the biblical literature in Gen 2:6–7.¹⁸ In the second Sumerian creation account, man sprouts up from the ground like grass. According to Tikva Frymer-Kensky, “this concept did not play a major role in Babylonian religion, possibly because it was associated with An and Enlil rather than Enki.”¹⁹ Remember, Enlil was the ancient Mesopotamian storm-god who was associated with making the vines grow (see chapter 3, heading 2.1). He was also responsible for “herding-together the thick rain clouds” and determined the amount of rain that fell each year in Mesopotamia. Enlil is the earliest-known storm-god that is recorded in the preserved literature.

There are two Sumerian sources that highlight the creation of man as the product of being planted in the ground. The first source comes from the introduction to the hymn to the E-Engur, the temple of Enki at Eridu:

¹⁸ Frymer-Kensky, “The Planting of Man: A Study in Biblical Imagery,” 129.

¹⁹ There are more Enki stories in the Babylonian mythology than Enlil stories. Enki stories are typically associated with the first account of creation with clay.

When destinies had been established for all engendered things,
 When An had engendered the year of abundance
 When people had broken through the ground like plants.²⁰

The second source for this tradition comes from the "Creation of the Pickaxe."²¹

Enlil, in order to cause the seed of the land to arise from the earth,
 Hastened to separate heaven from earth,
 Hastened to separate heaven from earth.
 In order that the "flesh-producer" might produce the vanguard (of man)
 He bound up the gash in Duranki (the bond of heaven and earth).
 Placing the "vanguard of man" in the "flesh-producer" with the pickaxe,
 He placed the vanguard of mankind into the mold
 Toward Enlil (the people) of his land sprouted up through the ground.²²

This is not an easily understood text, but the description of Enlil 'planting' the seed of the people in the ground is apparent in these texts. According to Thorkild Jacobsen, "Enlil with his pickax breaks the hard top crust of the earth which has thus far prevented the first humans, developed below, from sprouting forth just as such a crust will often prevent germinating plants from breaking through."²³ The place where this sprouting occurred was at the center of the temple of Inanna in Nippur. Clifford explains that, "the reason for the sacred character of the place is that in primeval times the earth produced mankind there."²⁴ Jacobsen maintains that that this location was also known as Dur-an-ki "the bond of Heaven and Earth."²⁵ Thus, the mountain where the temple stood was also the site of the creation of the society.

20 Translation taken from Frymer-Kensky, "The Planting of Man: A Study in Biblical Imagery," 130. This text was originally analyzed by Thorkild Jacobsen, "Sumerian Myth: A Review Article," *JNES* 5 (1946): 135.

21 Samuel Noah Kramer is the one who named this tradition the "Creation of the Pickaxe," and who has written extensively on Sumerian Mythology, *Sumerian Mythology: A Study of Spiritual and Literary Achievements in the Third Millennium B.C.* (rev. ed.; New York: Harper, 1961), 51–53.

22 Translation taken from Frymer-Kensky, "The Planting of Man: A Study in Biblical Imagery," 131.

23 Jacobsen, "Sumerian Myth: A Review Article," 136.

24 Clifford, *Cosmic Mountain*, 14.

25 Jacobsen, "Sumerian Myth: A Review Article," 137.

Tikva Frymer-Kensky also points out that, “the ‘seed of the land’ is ultimately related to ‘mother earth’ and to the relationship between human sexuality and the earth’s fertility, which is so important to pagan religions. The female, like the earth, is ‘ploughed’ by the farmer and ‘planted’ with ‘seed.’”²⁶ The farmer in this instance is the Sumerian god, Enlil, who worked tirelessly to separate the heavens and the earth, so that the ground could be ploughed for the first humans to sprout forth from like plants.

The primary ancient Sumerian creation account depicts the origin of man from clay, similar to Akkadian and biblical origin stories. However, there is also a strain of Sumerian cosmogony that equates human evolution with agriculture. In this myth, man sprouted from the earth just as plants sprout from the earth. Thus, terminology from horticulture such as ‘seed’ and ‘breaking through’ became the basis for comprehending human conception as well.

3.2 *Ugaritic Literature*

The idea that the gods “planted” the seed of man in the ground is an image that is not unique to ancient Sumeria. According to the Baal Cycle, ‘Anatu is invited to put her ‘love-fruit’ into the ground.’²⁷ The word ‘love fruit’ (*ddym*) also occurs in Hebrew (דודים). Korpel identifies this term as ‘the mandrake.’²⁸ The mandrake was a plant used in ancient societies as an aphrodisiac to stimulate fertility.²⁹ De Moor concludes from this text in the Baal cycle that, “the earth represents a woman who must be impregnated by rains and seed-ploughing before she can bring forth the crop. Thus, it would seem that the act of putting the fruit of the mandrake into the earth is a rite to stimulate the fertility of Mother Earth.”³⁰ This act may also be connected to the autumn agricultural cycle and the ploughing of the land after the fall rains.

The goddess ‘Anatu is also designated by two epithets describing her as the embodiment of fertility, namely ‘breast [td] of the Nations’ and ‘Womb’ [rh].³¹ As she was the consort of the great storm-god Baal, it is noteworthy that she was involved in planting and possibly also contributed to an early idea of gods/goddesses as planters of the people.

26 Frymer-Kensky, “The Planting of Man: A Study in Biblical Imagery, 130.”

27 KTU 1.3:III.15 par.

28 See Korpel, *Rift in the Clouds*, 433.

29 Gustaf Dalman, *Arbeit Und Sitte in Palästina* (vol. 1/1; Band; Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1928), 250 f.

30 Johannes C. de Moor, *The Seasonal Pattern in the Ugaritic Myth of Baal, According to the Version of Illimilku* (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, 1971), 105.

31 Cf. KTU 1.13: 19–22 and KTU 1.6:II.5,27; 1.23:13,16; 1.15:11.6.

3.3 *Persian Literature*

The Zoroastrian creation myth specifies that the world was created in seven days and humanity began with a single individual named Gayomard.³² Upon his death, Gayomard emitted a seed that produced the first male and female pair, Masya and Masyani. The Greater (Iranian) Bundahisn, a collection of stories pertaining to Zoroastrian cosmogony, describes the first human pair as sprouting from the ground as a rhubarb plant.³³

When Gayomard emitted the seed whilst passing away, they-filtered the seed by means of the light of the Sun. On the completion of forty years, Masya and Masyani grew up for the earth in the astral-body of a 'rivas' plant having one stem of fifteen leaves ... Then both of them changed from the astral-body of a plant into the astral-body of a man, and that light, which is the soul, entered spiritually into them, that is, verily, they had grown up in the semblance of a tree, whose fruit was the ten races of mankind. He Ohrmazd spoke to Masya and Masyani: 'You are the seed of man, you are the parents of the world.'³⁴

IV: 5–6, 10–11

Masya and Masyani grew as identical plants in height and appearance until they were changed into human form. From this first human pair, six sets of twins were born that eventually populated the earth. This literature clearly portrays the autochthonous origin of the first human pair and plants are highlighted as the vessel for their evolution.

32 Mary Boyce, *Textual Sources for the Study of Zoroastrianism* (Textual Sources for the Study of Religion; Totowa: Barnes & Noble Books, 1984), 10.

33 The Bundahisn ("Creation") was redacted during the first millennium C.E. (Sasanian Period), but the content is thought to be much older. According to the Zoroastrian scholar Mary Boyce, "here is preserved an ancient, in part pre-Zoroastrian picture of the world, a world girdled by two great rivers, from which all other waters flow; in which yearly the gods fight against the demons to end drought and famine, and to bring protection to man."

34 Behramgore Tehmuras Anklesaria, trans., *Zand-Akasiḥ: Iranian or Greater Bundahisn* (Bombay: Published for the Rahnumae Mazdayasnan Sabha by its Honorary Secretary Dastur Framroze A. Bode, 1956), 127–129.

4 Biblical Planting Evidence

The first image of YHWH in the Hebrew Bible is that of a creator. According to Gen 2, the creator plants a beautiful garden:

- | | |
|--|---|
| וַיִּצַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם עֹפָר מִן־הָאֲדָמָה וַיִּפַּח בְּאַפָּיו נֶשְׁמַת חַיִּים וַיְהִי הָאָדָם לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה: | 7 |
| וַיִּטַּע יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים גֶּן־עֵדֶן מִקְדֵּם וַיִּשֶׂם שֵׁם אֶת־הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר יִצַּר: | 8 |
| וַיִּצְמַח יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים מִן־הָאֲדָמָה כָּל־עֵץ נֹחַמָד לְמַרְאֵה וטוֹב לְמַאֲכָל וְעֵץ הַחַיִּים בְּתוֹךְ הָגֶן וְעֵץ הַדַּעַת טוֹב ורָע: | 9 |

7. Then YHWH God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. 8. And YHWH God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. 9. Out of the ground YHWH God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Gen 2:7–9

This garden was a special place and there are references in this story to God walking around in the garden “in the cool of the day.” Clearly, this was more than just a place for the first humans, it was also a place of comfort for the creator. Serenity, tranquility, and peace are all images that resonate from the description of this garden, an oasis of paradise.

In just a few verses YHWH is depicted as the creator of man, the planter of all vegetation on earth, the architect of a lavish garden, and there are references to sacred trees within this garden. The combinations of these images of the divine should not be come as a surprise given the emphasis on agricultural productivity among the ancient Near Eastern storm-gods. Even the iconographic sources depict ancient Near Eastern deities near sacred trees within gardens, while maintaining complete control over the agricultural calendar. It is interesting to note, however, that YHWH formed man from the “dust of the earth” in this context. The creation from the dust of the earth follows the Mesopotamian creation motif and this becomes the biblical picture of creation of man as well.

The second time the biblical text mentions God “planting” is in Exod 15:17, which is considered an earlier text than Genesis 2.³⁵

35 Peter Lanfer gives a detailed analysis of the evidence for a pre-exilic date for Genesis 2–

תבאמו ותטעמו בהר נחלתך מכון לשבתך פעלת יהוה מקדש אדני
כוננו ידיך:

You brought them in and planted them on the mountain of your possession, the fixed place of your dwelling that you made, O YHWH, the sanctuary, O YHWH, that your hands have established.³⁶

Here, the reference to planting is attributed to the people of Israel and God is acknowledged for “planting them on his mountain.” The divine’s resting place was chosen as the location for a people with whom he has made a covenant. This image of YHWH literally planting the people of Israel became a powerful symbol in biblical literature, especially among the prophetic oracles.

Scholars have long recognized the connection between the two creation accounts in Genesis 1 and 2 and the creation of the people of God at Sinai in Exodus 14–15. In each creation account, YHWH maintains his sovereignty over the powers of chaos. The threat of the world returning to a primordial tumult was a valid concern to these ancient societies. Bernard F. Batto argues that ‘chaos’ consisted of two equally powerful forces; “One was the primeval flood or ocean, frequently portrayed as a dragon-like monster; the other was the barren desert.”³⁷ In the Genesis creation accounts, there was no vegetation on the ground until God planted. Furthermore, there was no control over the primordial waters until God set specific boundaries for the “waters above and waters below.” Finally, creation culminated with God’s rest.

The Song of the Sea follows similar motifs. YHWH not only subdued the dragon-like monster of Pharaoh and his army, but he also planted the people Israel on a cosmic mountain. According to the biblical text, this song was sung in the desert. By acknowledging YHWH as a “gardener” in a wasteland, images of creation are evoked once again. Finally, just as in the creation of the world, there is a reference in Exod 15:17 to YHWH’s place of rest. As a people of YHWH, they are given the privilege to be planted on the same mountain where he resides. The connections between these two myths are unmistakable and they are each tied to the notion of Yahweh as a gardener who “plants” as part of his creation.

3 in Peter T. Lanfer, *Remembering Eden: The Reception History of Genesis 3:22–24* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2010), 10–12.

36 Translation is my own.

37 Batto, *Slaying the Dragon*, 47.

There are many references in the biblical text to people as plants or people like grass, but mainly it is the nation of Israel that is compared to a plant/vine. Frymer-Kensky correctly observes that, “the plant image becomes a very important way in which Israel expresses its history, the way God tended it, planted it, will destroy it, and will then replant it.”³⁸ The image of the nation of Israel as a seed or a vine that was planted by the divine and grew from the earth originates in Exodus 15, yet this metaphor inspired many other biblical authors as well. The prophetic literature draws heavily on the metaphor of the people as plants, but more specifically, vines among the vineyard. This image becomes a visual indicator of the health of the divine/human relationship.

The creation account in Genesis 2 specifies that man was created from the dust of the earth, yet the creation of the nation of Israel occurred on a cosmic mountain and the people were the fruit of his planting, the carefully tended vine of a master vintner. Jacob's dream in Gen 28:10–22 foreshadows this idea of the people of Israel. In this text, the descendants of Jacob are promised a particular land where there will be blessings for all:

והיה זרעך כעפר הארץ ופרצת ימה וקדמה וצפנה ונגבה ונברכו
בך כל-משפחת האדמה ובזרעך:

Your seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and you shall spread to the west
and to the east and to the north, and to the south. And by you and by your
seed shall all the families of the earth find blessing.

Gen 28:14

The Hebrew word זרע “offspring/seed” also means “a sowing” or a “seed sown to raise crops.” The picture here of Jacob's seed sprouting up all over the land conjures images of vegetation and an abundant crop which will eventually be planted on God's holy mountain in Exodus 15:17.

Jeremiah 31:27 echoes the depiction of the people as seeds found in Gen 28:14, but the setting is quite different. In this passage, the prophet envisions a new creation of the people, but this new creation will take place once they have returned from exile:

הנה ימים באים נאם-יהוה וזרעתי את-בית ישראל
ואת-בית יהודה זרע אדם וזרע בהמה:

³⁸ Frymer-Kensky, “The Planting of Man: A Study in Biblical Imagery,” 133.

The days are surely coming, says YHWH, when I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of humans and the seed of animals.

The houses of Israel and Judah are both mentioned as part of this sowing, possibly referring to a unified Israel once again. The people will be sown into the land, similar to planting a seed in the ground. Furthermore, Psalm 139:13–15 juxtaposes creation from the mother's womb with creation from the depths of the earth. Creation from within the earth is not as popular as creation from dust/clay, but both creation accounts involve soil as their primary medium.

The creation of man from the dust of the earth is the predominant creation story in the Hebrew Bible. Job 33:6 draws on this tradition: "I too was formed from a piece of clay." There are also traces of the origin of man from a seed, but these examples depict the metaphorical planting of man in the land, similar to Exod 15:17. YHWH is the master planter both metaphorically and literally. He plants a lush garden in Genesis 2, he promises the planting of a people in Genesis 28, he plants the people in Exodus 15, and he promises to re-plant the people in Jeremiah 31 and other post-exilic texts. Thus, the people as a planting of YHWH, remains a persistent motif in biblical literature.

5 The Metaphor YHWH IS THE PLANTER OF THE PEOPLE

The metaphor of YHWH as the planter or more specifically, the vintner of the nation of Israel has its roots in ancient Near Eastern storm-god mythology as well as early depictions of the divine in the Hebrew Bible. The Hebrew god as a gardener is an early view of Yahwism, yet remains a consistent theme throughout the biblical text. When the divine becomes the planter, the conceptual domain of agriculture is used to form an understanding of the relationship between man and God. Since people think metaphorically, it is not uncommon to find concepts from everyday life, such as horticulture, a dominant theme in the metaphorical conversation. In this way, the image of Israel as the plant or vine of YHWH developed within biblical literature.

The specific metaphor of YHWH as the planter of the nation of Israel is only mentioned twice in the Torah (Genesis 2 and Exodus 15), but eventually became a standard method of expression by later authors to depict the evolving picture of the divine and his people. The mythical language and the colorful imagery within the Song of the Sea were contributing factors that led to its popularity. David Noel Freedman eloquently argues that the poem closes with

“the vivid description of the people planted in the sacred precinct, the peculiar possession of YHWH, where his sanctuary stands, the dais of his throne, all made by his own hands.”³⁹ The idea of a nation being planted by God and not just a certain tribe, aided the efforts for forming a unified nation.

The emphasis on horticulture in ancient Israel contributed to the metaphorical mapping of the people as plants. For example, the ‘righteous ones’ are compared to lush trees planted by water in Psalm 1 and foreign nations are likened to tall cedars in Amos 2:9. People are depicted as plants and vines, but also as compared to “a fig tree, a lily, and the people are the fruit of the tree.”⁴⁰ The nation of Israel is the group that is most often correlated with this planting imagery, both as a flourishing vine and as a worthless fruit. The biblical literature clearly specifies that YHWH has the ability to not only plant, but to uproot as well.

6 The Relationship between Planting and Uprooting

The previous survey of ancient Near Eastern storm-gods highlighted that these gods were believed to be intimately involved in agricultural production (see chapter 3, heading 2). For instance, Baal says he is the only one who can “fatten gods and men, who satisfy the earth’s multitudes.”⁴¹ Baal was able to grow the crops, yet he was also instrumental in the storms that uprooted the crops and destroyed the food. The idea of storm-gods planting as well as uprooting is a common motif in Mesopotamian as well as Canaanite literature.

The Mesopotamian storm-god Enlil was in control of the planting and the sustenance of Nippur, but he also played a part in the destruction and uprooting of the foliage as well.

The mighty one, Enlil,
Whose utterance cannot be changed,
He is the storm, destroying the cattle pen,
Uprooting the sheepfold.
My roots are torn up! My forests denuded!⁴²

39 Freedman, “Early Israelite History in the Light of Early Israelite Poetry,” 11.

40 Korpel, *Rift in the Clouds*, 590.

41 KTU 1.4: VII.50–51.

42 Translation taken from Jacobsen, *Treasure of Darkness*, 102.

Here, Enlil is personified as a great storm, uprooting the plants and destroying the forests. Enlil is the planter of the crops, but he is also a contender in the destruction of the crops.

Ishkur-Adad's wrath dispatches a great deluge onto the land, as well as the uprooting of the "reed-beds out of their pools."⁴³ The speaker in the lament warns that the word of Ishkur-Adad has the capability of drowning the planted crops and ruination of the land right down to its foundation.

The Israelite god is depicted in a similar fashion to ancient Mesopotamian storm-gods. He too had the power to plant and multiply or to uproot and destroy. The verb נשא 'to pull out' also means 'to destroy' and the verb שרש, means 'to uproot' in the piel, but as a noun it means 'root/shoot.' Furthermore, Tikva Frymer-Kensky points out, "that such parallels as עקר 'to uproot' and עקרה 'barren woman,' יונק 'nursling' and ינקת 'sapling,' 'shoot,' 'tender plant' are built into the language."⁴⁴ The Hebrew language exhibits a parallel between the plant world and the emergence of humans into the world.

As part of the covenant with YHWH, the people were expected to forsake all foreign idols, including family idols. Unfortunately, the ancient Israelites were not able to completely abandon some of these idols, so the Deuteronomist and other biblical writings approached this same subject time and time again.

פְּרִישׁ בְּכֶם אִישׁ אִו־אִשָּׁה אוֹ מִשְׁפָּחָה או־שֶׁבֶט
אֲשֶׁר לִבָּבוּ פָנָה הַיּוֹם מֵעַם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ לְלַכֵּת
לְעַבְדָּת־אֱלֹהֵי הַגּוֹיִם הָהֵם פְּרִישׁ בְּכֶם שֶׁרֶשׁ
פָּרָה רֹאשׁ וְלַעֲנָה:

It may be that there is among you a man or woman, or a family or tribe, whose heart is already turning away from YHWH our God to serve the gods of those nations. It may be that there is among you a root sprouting poisonous and bitter growth.

Deut 29:18

The image of the people as the root of a corrupted growth can be found woven throughout the biblical text, especially in the prophetic literature.

The prophets frequently warned the people that YHWH would uproot those who did not follow his commandments, particularly those commands surrounding idolatry. For example, in Ezek 17:9, Ezekiel is commanded by God

43 Doyle, *The Storm-God Ishkur-Adad: Texts and Studies*, 151 (K.24 + Landon, BL 16).

44 Frymer-Kensky, "The Planting of Man: A Study in Biblical Imagery," 131.

to dictate what will happen to the noble vine (Israel) that was planted by abundant waters:

אמר כה אמר אדני יהוה תצלח הלא את־שרשיה ינתק ואת־פריה
יקוסס ויבש כל־טרפי צמחה תיבש ולא־בזרע גדולה ובעם־רב למשאות
אותה משרשיה:

Say: Thus says the LORD God:
Will it prosper?
Will he not pull up its roots,
cause its fruit to rot and wither,
its fresh sprouting leaves to fade?

The people broke the covenant that YHWH made with them in Deuteronomy 29, so even though they were given a prime planting location and were cared for by the divine, their roots were uprooted due to their unfaithfulness. This imagery will be developed further in chapter seven, but there is a clear connection between the planting of the people and the uprooting of the unfaithful followers within the biblical literature.

Interestingly, these images are directly tied to the people and their physical relationship with the land. When the Israelites are living in the land, they are considered “planted.” The destruction of Jerusalem and the surrounding areas in 586 B.C.E., however, displaced the people and they were no longer considered “planted” in the land. Instead, they were displaced or “uprooted” from the ground. Only once the remnant returns a few decades later, the literature depicts the people as “planted” once more. The metaphor of Israel as God’s planting coincides with the historical events of the nation, but this metaphor is also intricately connected to Israel’s flourishing wine industry in the first millennium B.C.E.

7 Conclusion

YHWH is depicted as an ancient storm-god in several early biblical poems/hymns, responsible for agricultural production and climate conditions. Many of his attributes stem from other ancient Near Eastern storm-god prerogatives. These gods were known as the planters and the up-rooters, depending upon their temperament. They inhabited lavish gardens and were associated with planting imagery. Metaphorically, they were depicted as planters of people. Some Sumerian, Ugaritic and Persian literature even demonstrate an

autochthonous origin of humanity, further highlighting the interplay between agriculture and divinity. Biblical literature maintains the creation of man from clay, although the metaphorical discourse depicts the 'sowing' of people as seed.

Many metaphors from the natural world are used for YHWH, but one in particular is YHWH as the planter of the people on a cosmic mountain. This idea stems from Exod 15:17 and introduces a myriad of planting images associated with people throughout the biblical text. According to Lakoff and Johnson, "metaphor is not merely a matter of language; it involves all the natural dimensions of our experience."⁴⁵ Therefore, metaphor is an indispensable part of how people experience the world. The metaphor YHWH IS THE PLANTER OF THE PEOPLE reveals a complex picture of an evolving relationship. Since metaphor expresses cultural understanding, an analysis of this particular metaphor should illuminate some of the intricacies of ancient Israelite society and thought.

After surveying Hebrew descriptions of the divine, Marjo Korpel affirms that, "the metaphorical language the Old Testament uses in descriptions of God and the sphere of the divine, forms the basis of Jewish and Christian religious language."⁴⁶ One snapshot of this sphere is the image of the divine as a planter, but more specifically as the vintner of a carefully tended vine. The preoccupation with viticulture in ancient Israel fueled this image. Chapter five will survey the material culture and the archaeological evidence pertaining to viticulture and its prominence in ancient Israel.

45 Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 235.

46 Korpel, *A Rift in the Clouds*, 32.

Wine Making in Iron Age Israel

For the land that you are about to enter to occupy is not like the land of Egypt, from which you have come, where you sow your seed and irrigate by foot like a vegetable garden. But the land that you are crossing over to occupy is a land of hills and valleys, watered by rain from the sky, a land that YHWH your God looks after. The eyes of YHWH your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. If only you would heed every commandment I am commanding you today—loving YHWH your God, and serving him with all of your heart and with all of your soul—then he will give you the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the late rain, and you will gather in your grain, your wine, and your oil; and he will give you grass for your livestock, and you will eat your fill.

Deut 11:10–15



The “promised land,” with its lush hilly terrains and deep valley basins, is typically pictured in the biblical text in stark contrast to the dry, arid land of Egypt. Not only is the soil of this particular area fertile and the topography varied, but the face of the divine also shines on this piece of acreage every day of the year. This is the chosen land that was promised to Abraham and his descendants, the plot where YHWH consciously “planted” the people after the wilderness wanderings.¹ The benefits of this planting, however, was dependent upon a series of stipulations. The people were commanded to love YHWH completely if they desired to reap the blessings of the land. This storm-god was not going to allow the rain to fall in its proper times for grain and wine production unless these stipulations were met. The success of the crops and the flourishing of the vines depended upon the people and their relationship with the divine. Therefore, it is imperative to discuss the correlation between the natural world and the health of this relationship.

¹ Cf. Isa 5:7; 37:31–32; Jer 11:17; 24:5–7; Ezek 17:22–23; 24:5–7; 36:8–9. The exilic passages highlight the location of the planting as “Israel” or “Jerusalem” more than the pre-exilic passages.

This chapter will explore the ecological connection drawn in the Hebrew Bible between the success of the soil and the favor of the master gardener, YHWH. The ancient Israelites were completely dependent upon the soil for their sustenance and survival. As Deuteronomy 11 contends, the fertility of the land was contingent upon a certain amount of rainfall during the rainy season. Large bodies of water were in limited supply in ancient Israel, especially near Jerusalem, and so the winter rains provided the necessary nourishment for the crops. Even though many scholars have attempted to diminish the importance of the natural world within early Israelite religion, reliance on a powerful storm-god was a fundamental aspect of the early settlers of ancient Canaan.

This chapter will also discuss the prominent role viticulture played in Iron Age Israel, at both a local and national level. The dry summers and fall rains created a favorable environment for wine production. Whereas beer was the drink of choice in the majority of other ancient Near Eastern cultures, wine was the predominant drink of ancient Israel. Interestingly, beer is not even mentioned in the biblical text.²

The development of the metaphor of YHWH as the vintner of the vine “Israel” became a visual image of a culturally dominant activity and a source of pride for the people. Viticulture was intricately linked to the harvest cycle in the fall; wine making was a time of merriment for families. It was commonplace for farmers to have vineyards as part of their estates and there is evidence of royal wine production on a larger scale as well. The grape harvest also coincided with The Feast of Booths (Sukkoth), one of the three main pilgrimage festivals in ancient Israel. Viticulture became a powerful icon of the developing nation.

We live in a world in which advances in technology and the emergence of large corporations have detached many from food production. The consumer buys food at the market, yet rarely knows the mechanics behind the food production. What are the chances that the average wine drinker in our modern culture knows even the location of the vineyard where the wine was produced, let alone the lengthy and often fragile steps involved in wine production? The Israelite farmers, on the contrary, were intimately involved in the day-to-day production of growing their own food and drink. Norma Wirzba argues that, “food was central to a culture’s attempt to define itself and what it held dear. It carried immense symbolic power since food consumption was the concrete act in terms of which social relations, work life, geographical identity, and

2 Unless you consider שכר to be a term referring to all fermented drinks, not just wine.

religious ritual came together.”³ Agrarianism was the way of life for the majority of the population in ancient Israel. Therefore, the prophets’ use of images from agriculture, especially viticulture, to portray the health of the relationship between the people and their god, reflects this way of life.

1 Israel: Climate and Location

O Children of Zion, be glad and rejoice in YHWH your God; for he has given the early rain for your vindication, he has poured down for you abundant rain, the early and the later rain.

Joel 2:23

Israel is a small country sandwiched in between the Mediterranean Sea to the west, the dessert to the east, Syria to the north, and Egypt to the south. It is considered part of the “Levant,” which includes Lebanon and part of Syria, known as Canaan in the biblical texts.⁴ Israel, Greece, Italy, France, and California are just a few of the areas that lie between 30 and 48 degrees north, providing ideal locations for viticulture due to climate and topography.⁵ Joel 2:23 mentions both the “early” and the “later” rains, that are characteristic of the Mediterranean zone (“early” refers to the rains of winter and autumn, “later” refers to the rains of spring). This small territory was also known to be rich in natural resources. The biblical text and several outside sources depict this land as abundant in honey, wine, grain, oil, cattle, and iron, to name but a few of its products (Deut 8:7–9). The early settlers became avid agriculturists and introduced many innovations, terracing being the most pertinent innovation to this study.

Israel’s natural conditions were supplanted by its strategic location in the ancient Near East. Amihai Mazar eloquently explains the importance of its location for trade and the spread of culture:

The geographic location of the country determined its important role in the history of the ancient Near East. On the one hand, this region formed

3 Norman Wirzba, *The Paradise of God: Renewing Religion in an Ecological Age* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 182–183.

4 Amihai Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible: 10,000–586 B.C.E.* (The Anchor Bible Reference Library; New York: Doubleday, 1992), 3.

5 Carey Ellen Walsh, *The Fruit of the Vine: Viticulture in Ancient Israel* (Harvard Semitic Monographs 60; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 27.

a bridge between the two ends of the Fertile Crescent: Egypt on the south and Syria and Mesopotamia in the north: on the other hand, it was compressed between the Mediterranean Sea on the west and the desert to the east. This unique situation was the basic factor in the country's history and cultural development. More than any other country in the ancient world, this land was directly and indirectly connected with other parts of the Near East and the eastern Mediterranean.⁶

The inhabitants of the Levant lived in small villages during their early years.⁷ Large cities developed over time as the need for walled protection became increasingly necessary, but agriculture remained the backbone of the society. Concerning agriculture in Iron Age Israel, Oded Borowski argued that, "the impact that agriculture had on ancient Israel could be seen in almost every facet of daily life, economic, social and cultural."⁸ Agriculture was a consuming feature of life, work, and religion. The Israelite farmer was dependent on the soil for his sustenance. Preparing the fields, planting the seeds, and harvesting the grains and fruit would have been his preoccupation most waking hours. Ancient Israel was an agrarian culture, steeped in the regulations and traditions associated with the harvest cycle.

2 Ancient Israelite Vineyards

You shall plant vineyards and dress them.

Deut 28:39

There are at almost 300 references to the word "wine" in the biblical literature. The generic Hebrew name for wine is יַיִן and is thought to derive from the Hittite *wīyanas*.⁹ This makes sense considering the origin of grape vines has been iden

6 Amihai Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible: 10,000–586 B.C.E.* (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1992), 2.

7 Ibid., 338. Most of the Iron 1 village sites excavated were not fortified.

8 Borowski, *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel*, 9.

9 According to Raphael Frankel, "the similar names for wine in Ugaritic (*yn*), Hebrew (*yyn*), Greek ([*w*]oinos), and Cypro-Syllabic (*wo-i-no*) almost certainly derived from the Hittite *wīyanas*, making the probability that the wine of the Levant and Greece originated from this region even greater." Frankel, *Wine and Old Production in Antiquity in Israel and Other Mediterranean Countries* (JSOT/ASOR Monographs 10; Sheffield, Eng.: Sheffield Academic Press Ltd., 1999), 35. See also John P. Brown, "The Mediterranean Vocabulary of the Vine" *VT* 19 (1969): 147–151.

tified as the central Anatolian highlands.¹⁰ The Aramaic term for wine חמר can also be found several times in the Hebrew Bible. Just as we have various classifications of wine such as Cabernet and Zinfandel, the ancient Hebrews had their own assortment of wine subdivisions. Some of these include: new wine (תירוש); fermenting fresh wine/must (עסיס); choice wine (שרקה); sweet wine (יין על-עסיס); sour wine (חמץ); mixed wine (מסך שכר); spiced wine (יין הרקה); and strong drink (שכר). These classifications attest to a diverse vocabulary surrounding wine production and consumption in ancient Israel. For example, there are over 150 separate terms related to viticulture or wine consumption in the Hebrew Bible, even though the mechanics of grape production is not a primary concern of the text.¹¹ These terms are used with technical precision by the biblical authors because of wine's trade appeal and many of these same terms are found throughout the Mediterranean basin.

The many references to viticulture in the Hebrew Bible are only one indicator that wine production was an important part of the material culture of Israel. There are also ancient Near Eastern sources that attest to the ample amounts of wine in this area. Several Egyptian texts depict viticulture as a distinctive characteristic of the Levant. For example, the Story of Si-nuhe written in approximately 1800 B.C.E., describes ancient Israel as "a good land ... Figs were in it, and grapes. It had more wine than water."¹² The author goes on to list many of the commodities of the land: olives, honey, barley, milk, limitless cattle, and specifies that wine was a daily provision. Wine was also one of the items in a list of booty brought back from Megiddo by Thutmose III.¹³ Furthermore, mural paintings from the reign of Amenophis II (1450–1425 B.C.E.) portray Hapiru, whom scholars have tried to show a similarity with the ancient Hebrews, press-

10 Cf. Patrick E. McGovern, *Uncorking the Past: The Quest for Wine, Beer, and Other Alcoholic Beverages*. (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009), 103. See also, Ronald L. Gorny, "Viticulture and Ancient Anatolia," in *Origins and Ancient History of Wine* (ed. P.E. McGovern, S.J. Fleming, and S.H. Katz; Amsterdam: Overseas Publishers Association, 1996), 171.

11 Jack M. Sasson compiled a comprehensive list of vocabulary for viticulture and wine production in the Hebrew Bible. See Sasson, "The Blood of Grapes: Viticulture and Intoxication in the Hebrew Bible," in *Drinking in Ancient Societies: History and Culture of Drinks in the Ancient Near East* (ed. L. Milano; History of the Ancient Near East Studies 6; Padova: Sargon Srl, 1994), 411–419. Brown also compiled a list of Mediterranean vocabulary for viticulture, "The Mediterranean Vocabulary of the Vine," 146–170.

12 James B. Pritchard, ed., *The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 7.

13 Cf. *ibid.*, 233.

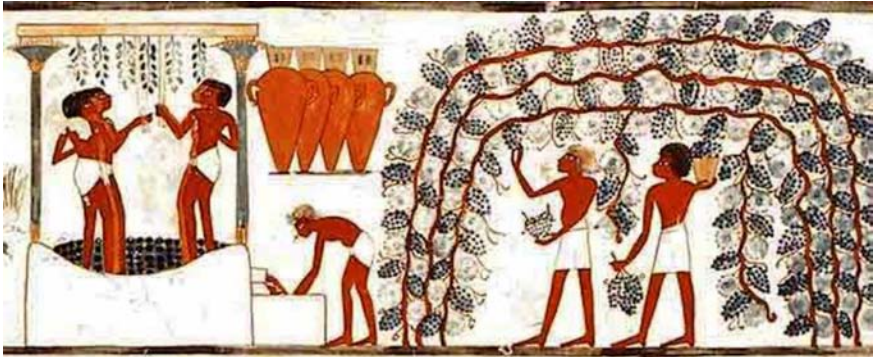


FIGURE 5 *Gathering grapes and making wine, tomb of Nakht, Thebes.*

PRITCHARD, *THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST: AN ANTHOLOGY OF TEXTS AND PICTURES*, PLATE 19

ing grapes (see Figure 5).¹⁴ Based on these mural paintings, Asaph Goor argues that “the Hapiru of that time were the specialized wine-makers and vintners of Egypt.”¹⁵ This assumption may be a leap, but given the level of interest in viticulture in the Levant, the ancient Hebrews may well have been vintners in Egypt. What is clear, when Canaan is described in ancient sources, viticulture is mentioned as a defining feature of the area and often sought after commodity.

While grape pips are not native to the Levant, its climate and topography provided the ideal components for wine to become a flourishing dietary staple even before the Chalcolithic period. Archaeological excavations trace the domestication of the Eurasian grapevine to the Hittite Civilization in Anatolia around 7500 B.C.E.¹⁶ Eventually, information and technology about fermented

14 See Asaph Goor, “The History of the Grape-Vine in the Holy Land,” *EB* 20 (1966): 47. The assonance of the terms hapiru and Hebrew (עברי), as well as the seemingly similar time period that both groups existed, has led many scholars to believe that the hapiru and the Hebrews (העברים) could be the same people. The discovery of the Tel Amarna letters further heightened the interest in the connection between the hapiru and the Hebrews (העברים). In these letters, the Sumerian ideogram SA.GAZ and the term hapiru occur together 125 times and the SA.GAZ are recorded to be dwelling throughout Syria and Palestine, the same area that the Hebrew Old Testament states that the ancient Hebrews lived. Furthermore, several of the letters were written by the ruler of Jerusalem to the ruler of Egypt, pleading for help against the hapiru who were raiding their territories. The description of the hapiru in these letters and the descriptions in the Patriarchal narratives of how the Hebrews came to live in ancient Palestine, were very similar.

15 *Ibid.*, 47.

16 The Hittites encircled their ancient capital at Bogazkale, ancient Hattusha, with vineyards. The Eurasian grapevine is so desirable because it is hermaphroditic. According to McGov-

beverages moved south to Gaza, the Jordan Valley, and the southern Levantine hill country (ca. 3500 B.C.E.).¹⁷ Since wild grapes have not been found in the Southern Levant, Syria, or Egypt, branches from a successful vine must have been brought to these areas for domestication and cultivation. Victor H. Matthews argues that the success of these vines came from, “taking cuttings from proven producers and by grafting branches to new vines from those plants that have produced superior fruit.”¹⁸ Grapevines became widely cultivated in the Levant by the Iron Age.

The iconographic sources illustrate that viticulture was a visible aspect of the landscape in ancient Israel. For example, a relief depicting Israel during the time of Sennacherib’s siege (eighth century B.C.E.) portrays the land of Israel lined with low trees and vines (see Figure 6).

Furthermore, archaeological excavations throughout the countryside have revealed countless vineyards and wine presses, especially from the Iron Age. The physical remains of ancient vineyards coupled with documentation of wine production and trade, reinforces the emphasis placed on viticulture in the biblical text.

2.1 *Wine Production*

The metaphor of YHWH as a master vintner, carefully tending the vines along the terraced hills within the vineyard, would have been an image extracted from the physical landscape of ancient Israel. The people were accustomed to seeing vineyards, some enclosed within walls and some planted along hillsides, as part of their daily wanderings. This next section will discuss the process of wine production from the planting of the initial shoot until the ripened grape has been pressed and fermentation has made the juice a desirable drink. The archaeological and paleographic evidence provide an interesting and detailed account of this intricate and often delicate process.

Viticulture involved many stages of production and required a considerable amount of time and investment on the part of the vintner. Since grape vines (*Vitis vinifera* L.) are not native to Israel, a cutting from a thriving vine was

ern, “male stamens and female pistils are located together on the same flowers on the plant, whereas for the wild variety, male and female flowers occur on separate plants. The proximity of the sexual organs on the hermaphroditic plants ensures the production of much more fruit on a predictable basis. This self-fertilizing plant could then be selected for desirable traits, such as sweeter, juicier fruit or thicker skins, and cloned by propagation of branches, buds, or roots,” *Uncorking the Past*, 95.

17 Ibid., 175.

18 Matthews, “Treading the Winepress,” *Semeia*, 20.



FIGURE 6 *Sennacherib's army among low trees and vine (From relief in Nineveh).*

ILLUSTRATION TAKEN FROM GOOR, "THE HISTORY OF THE GRAPE VINE IN THE HOLY LAND," 49

needed as the initial 'seed.'¹⁹ Climate was also a major factor in successful wine manufacturing, as grapes cannot survive below zero degrees Fahrenheit. Israel's climate is Mediterranean, with warm summers and wet winters, which made this an ideal location for wine production. Henry Baker Tristram, who catalogued the natural history of Palestine, declared that this area has, "the true climate of the Vine. The rocky hill-sides, with their light gravelly soil and sunny exposures, the heat of summer, and the rapid drainage of the winter rains, all combine to render it peculiarly a land of vines."²⁰ This land of vines was aided in a large part by the rocky hillsides, as they provided ideal locations for vine cultivation. Once the ground was cleared of larger stones, the vine was planted in the rocky soil, often on steep hillsides.²¹ Most grains would not have survived in such rocky soil, so the growing of grapes did not compete with the more fertile soil needed for agricultural production.

19 The seeds of grapes do not yield flavorful wine, so a section of an existing plant is removed to create a new plant.

20 Henry Baker Tristram, *Natural History of the Bible* (New York: E. & J.B. Young, 1867), 404.

21 For more information on why steep hillsides are ideal habitats for grapes, see Cox, *From Vines to Wines*, 38.

Vineyards (כרם, מטעי כרם, שדמה) in ancient Israel were primarily grown on terraces, for the ancient farmers were well aware of the mechanics of soil erosion. If the vines were planted on the top of a hill, the periodic heavy rainstorm would have washed sections of soil away and damaged the plant. Carey Ellen Walsh points out that vineyards were typically planted on slopes because “the cool night air nearest the soil is denser than the air mass above and will slide downhill.”²² This way the freezing air near the bottom of the hill did not threaten the grapes towards the top of the slope. Terracing was an innovative technique employed by the Israelite farmer that had not been widely used in Canaan before the Iron Age.²³ Terracing was innovative because not only did this technique retain soil moisture, it also “prevented erosion of valuable top soil and allowed the development of a good root system for the vines.”²⁴ By terracing the hills, plots of agricultural land became available that did not take away from the land needed to harvest grains in the valleys. Several archaeologists maintain that terracing was the major technological innovation of the Iron Age.²⁵

The terraced hills have remained an iconic picture of the land of Israel from its inception (Jer 31:5). For example, over fifty percent of the hillsides in the vicinity of Jerusalem are terraced and excavations at Mevasseret Yerushalayim in 1978 revealed “a water cistern cut into the bedrock, numerous plastered basins, and channels—all findings characteristic of the oil and wine industries,” dated to the eighth and seventh centuries B.C.E.²⁶ Cisterns were used to hold rainwater and irrigation systems were designed to allow moderate water flow from the cisterns to the vineyards. Creating a functioning vineyard demanded a considerable amount of planning, management, and maintenance.

The newly planted vine (גפן היין) did not yield grapes useful for wine production during the first three or four harvest cycles, although tending and pruning of the plant were necessary during this time period. The “choice wine” (שרקה) that is mentioned in Jacob’s blessing (Gen 49:11) points to “the most careful

22 Walsh, *Fruit of the Vine*, 118.

23 See Borowski, *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel*, 11. The archaeological records show only a limited use of terracing by the Jebusites in the Late Bronze period.

24 Hannes Olivier, “God as Friendly Patron: Reflection on Isaiah 5:1–7,” *IDS* 30 (1996): 298.

25 See, for example, Zvi Ron, “Agricultural Terraces in the Judean Mountains,” *IEJ* 16 (1966): 33–49, 111–122. Joseph A. Callaway, “A Visit with Ahilud. A Revealing Look at Village Life When Israel First Settled the Promised Land,” *BAR* 9 (1983): 42–53. Lawrence E. Stager, “The Archaeology of the Family in Ancient Israel,” *BASOR* 260 (1985): 1–35.

26 Gershon Edelstein and Mordechai Kislev, “Mevasseret Yerushalayim: The Ancient Settlement and Its Agricultural Terraces,” *BA* 44, no. 1 (1981): 54.

selection of canes of high quality for the extension of vineyards.”²⁷ The choicest wines often required up to a decade or even more and, therefore, the vintner needed to tend the vine carefully tend for a good portion of his life before the crop began to produce top quality wine. Since grape cultivation demanded patience and frequent tending, the vintner needed to be committed to a sedentary lifestyle on an established plot of land.²⁸ According to 1 Kgs 4:25, the vine was also a symbol of stability: “During Solomon’s lifetime Judah and Israel lived in safety, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, all of them under their vines and fig trees.” Viticulture was not a hobby for the nomad, but rather the mark of a settled community.

Fortification is another sign of a settled community. Vineyards were fenced in to protect the plants from wild animals eating the leaves or the fruit (Song 2:15) as well as other unwanted solicitors. The vineyard described in Isaiah 5 had both a hedge (משוכה) and stonewall (גדר) for protection, as well as a watchtower (מגדל) for detecting long-range threats. Not every vintner in ancient Israel would have had a watchtower in their vineyard, but the royal gardens and some wealthier families could have afforded this type of protection. For example, King Uzziah was known as a man who loved the soil and had towers built within the vineyards in the hills (2 Chr 26:10). Interestingly, Borowski argues that, “many of the towers built in the Iron Age still stand on the terraces where the vineyards they guarded were cultivated, and some of them are still in use today.”²⁹ Destroying the crops and food sources was one of the first strategies of siege warfare, so this made the fields and vineyards especially vulnerable. The workers who maintained the vineyards often slept in these towers, particularly near the time of the harvest. Women were also known to be “keepers” of the vineyards and may have been trained vintners as well (Song 1:6). The destruction of a vineyard interrupted years of devoted labor and careful preparation, so protecting the vines was an important aspect of the vintage process.

Once the vineyard was fortified and the vines were planted, periodic pruning throughout the year maintained the health of the crop. Pruning (זמר) was a learned skill that necessitated knowing how much harvest should be expected from year to year. If the vintner wanted an abundant harvest the following year, he would prune lightly. The subsequent year, however, there would be less to harvest because the vines cannot produce an abundant crop every

27 Goor, “The History of the Grape-Vine in the Holy Land,” 47.

28 See chapter 6, heading 2.2 for a brief discussion of the owners of the grapevine in contrast to the vintners.

29 Borowski, *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel*, 161.

year. The determination of how much pruning was needed each term was at the discretion of the vintner, but typically took place in the winter months and again in the early summer months (the Gezer Calendar states that this pruning occurred in May and June). Pruning was a complicated process, but was a necessary one to ensure fruit growth because too many wood branches or leaves on the vine would have threatened the saplings.

Even though the initial planting and cultivation of the grapes required years of preparation, the gleaning (עוללת), treading (דרך), and fermenting (חמר) of the harvested grapes happened very quickly in late August and September. The archaeological remains have unearthed countless winepresses in Israel (see Figure 7).³⁰ For example, the site at Megiddo uncovered 117 winepresses, a few dating to the Chalcolithic period, but most dating to Iron I.³¹ The most common type of winepress (גת or פורה or יקב) found was the simple treading installation (see Figure 8).

In his study of agricultural installations in antiquity in Israel, Raphael Frankel describes the simple treading installations (דרכ בגת):

The simple treading installation was made up of two parts: a sloping uppers surface on which the pressing of the fruit-treading, crushing, pressing-was carried out, and the lower collection vat to which the expressed liquid flowed. The two were connected by channels or bores. The vast majority of these installations were cut in bed-rock, usually in the 'nari', the uniform easily cut rock that forms on the surface of chalk formations throughout the region. One hundred and sixty two such installations were recorded in the 1626 sample 10 km square. The total number in the area of the Israel-Palestine Grid probably reached tens of thousands.³²

The treading floors were typically rectangular in shape, although a few rounded treading floors were discovered as well. The simple 'four-rectangular plan' consisting of only a treading floor and collecting vat (נאד or נבל) remained the typical winery in Israel until very recent times. Since wine and oil production

30 Cf. David Eitam, "Selected Oil and Wine Installations in Ancient Israel," in *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1987), 102–113. Gösta W. Ahlström, "Wine Presses and Cup-Marks of the Jenin-Megiddo Survey," *BASOR* 231 (1978): 19–49. David Eitam, "Survey of Agricultural Installations," in *The Manasseh Hill Country Survey: The Shechem Syncline*, ed. A. Zertal (Haifa, 1992). Magen D. Broshi, "Wine in Ancient Palestine-Introductory Notes," *IMJ* 3 (1984): 21–40.

31 See Ahlström's survey of the Megiddo area, "Wine Presses and Cup-Marks," 19–49.

32 Frankel, *Wine and Old Production in Antiquity*, 51.



FIGURE 7 Bronze age winepress (Migdal Haemek).

PHOTO CREDIT: WWW.BIBLEWALKS.COM

both involve expressing liquid from the fruit, it can be difficult to distinguish between the two installations, especially considering the biblical lexicon does not differentiate between the two. The vat for collecting the olive oil was usually much smaller, however, than the vat to collect wine and so this became one of the distinguishing markers between the two types of installations.³³ Frequently, oil presses and wine presses were found in close proximity to one another.³⁴

The archaeological remains of wine presses in ancient Israel portray a northern Phoenician style and a southern Judean style in the Iron Age II pe-

33 Olive picking did not begin until October, whereas the grape harvest was usually completed by late September. Therefore, some scholars argue that one installation could have been used for both processes. See David Eitam, "The Production of Oil and Wine in Mount Ephraim in the Iron Age" (Hebrew), (Unpublished MA thesis, Tel Aviv University, 1980), 26. Others disagree because using the same installation would have affected the taste. Cf. H.A. Forbes and A. Foxhall, "The Queen of all Trees: Preliminary Notes on the Archaeology of the Olive," *Expedition* 21:37–47.

34 Walsh, *Fruit of the Vine*, 152–153.



FIGURE 8 *Winery, four-rectangle plan (Ayalon screw mortice).*
 PICTURE TAKEN FROM FRANKEL, *WINE AND OLD PRODUCTION IN ANTIQUITY*, 149. TEL AVIV, ERETZ ISRAEL MUSEUM INST. 02 (PHOTO CREDIT: EITAN AYALON)

riod.³⁵ The lever and screw press was very rare in Judaea, whereas in Galilee, this was the main type of press. The wine presses in the north and the south show “great uniformity and internal development” within their respective regions.³⁶ Frankel concluded that regional diversity and cultural continuity was especially apparent in agricultural installations since these technologies were used by rural peasants who rarely left their villages or had contact with other cultures. Frankel maintains that,

The cities of the Bronze and Iron Age in Israel and the Levant were basically agricultural communities, and the classical and Talmudic written

35 See Frankel, *Wine and Old Production in Antiquity*, 164–169, for a detailed assessment of these findings.

36 Frankel, *Wine and Old Production in Antiquity*, 166.

sources show that the cultured elite were conversant with the technical details of the installations used. Nevertheless, the men who actually made and used the installations were not of this elite and probably often never left the immediate surroundings of their homes to see other installations, nor did they usually have many opportunities for other contacts with distant cultures.³⁷

In Jerusalem, however, a great variety of installations were found. This may be due to the extensive excavations that have taken place within the city. It is more likely that this diversity is due to the city's location as a site of pilgrimage and cultural exchange.³⁸ Jerusalem witnessed more foreign influence and less isolation than the other regions within the country and so a greater variation in wine presses is warranted.

Grapes quickly wither and fall to the ground if they are not harvested at the pristine moment, so the vintner either frequently checked the grapes maturation or remained permanently in the vineyard during the days leading up to the grape harvest. The grapes are ready to be harvested when they are "70–80 percent water and from 10–25 percent sugar."³⁹ At this point they will yield the most liquid. A trained eye was needed to know when the vintage (בציר) had matured from a smaller and sourer fruit to a bloated, and tasty refreshment. The biblical text refers to pruning hooks as מזמרות (Cf. Isa 2:4,18:5; Mic 4:3) and this was probably the tool used for vine gleanings as well. Once the harvest was gathered in baskets, it was taken to the wine installation area. The grapes were then trampled by foot and pressed with a simple lever and weight press, stored in vats, and allowed to ferment for several days at a temperature of 15–20 degrees Fahrenheit.⁴⁰ The fermented juice was then placed in a cool place for the second stage of fermentation, which lasted at least a few weeks. The festered juice yielded the finished product, sweet wine.

The abundance of wine in the land enabled the drink to be recognized as a staple beverage and therefore became an integral part of the social scene in ancient Israel. Vineyards lined the landscape and drinking wine was just as commonplace at banquets as at the table in the farmer's home.⁴¹ A vineyard

37 Ibid., 176.

38 Ibid., 169.

39 Walsh, *Fruit of the Vine*, 168.

40 According to the *Tosefta* (Ter. 7.15), the initial fermentation lasted three days. Pliny mentions nine days (14.25.124).

41 For a detailed survey of wine production in ancient Israel, see David Eitam, *Land of Wine, The Vine and Wine in the Land of Israel in Antiquity* (Hebrew). (Tel-Aviv, 1988).

was an inherited commodity, a priceless heirloom that was not to be sold at any cost. For example, the story of Naboth's vineyard in 1 Kings 21 recalls the dramatic tale of King Ahab's attempt to buy a vineyard. Naboth refused to sell the vineyard because he inherited it from his forefathers (נחלת אבותי). This vineyard had become part of his ancestral identity. Even the poor drank wine (Ruth 2:14) and Levitical law commanded the people to leave some of the gleanings for the poor (Deut 24:21; Lev 19:10). This was a commodity that was meant to be shared by all the people and eventually became a profitable trading commodity.

2.2 Wine Trade

The cultivation of the grape vine for the purpose of wine production became a national symbol and a source of communal pride for the ancient Israelites.⁴² Wine was consumed locally, but it was also a lucrative trading item. Since viticulture required a certain climate and soil type, Israel's location further bolstered its position as a wine producing region. Furthermore, epigraphic evidence such as the Gezer Calendar, the *lmk* jar handle inscriptions, the Samaria ostraca, and Egyptians sources all attest to a vibrant vintage culture, especially in the Iron Age.

2.2.1 Gezer Calendar

The Gezer Calendar is considered one of the earliest Hebrew (or possibly Phoenician) inscriptions dated to the late tenth century B.C.E. It was discovered at the excavations at Gezer in 1908 in a layer of dirt corresponding to the Iron II period. The paleographic comparison of the script with other inscriptions from this same time period confirms a tenth century date.⁴³ This inscription is particularly interesting for our study because it details an agricultural calendar from ancient Israel/Canaan.

Although scholars agree that the small limestone tablet is a calendar of some sort, there are disagreements regarding the dual or singular suffix following

42 In later Jewish history (Bar Kokhba Revolt ca. 132–135 C.E.), the grapevine and grape cluster were minted on coins. Interestingly, the Jews had access to Roman coinage at this time, but minted their own coins instead. Furthermore, Paleo Hebrew script was used instead of Aramaic or Greek. See Martin Goodman, "Coinage and Identity: The Jewish Evidence," in *Coinage and Identity in Roman Provinces* (ed. C. Howgego, A Burnett, and V. Heuchert; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 163–166. See also, Baruch Kanael, "Ancient Jewish Coins and Their Historical Importance," *BA* 26 (1963): 59–62. Paul Romanoff, "Jewish Symbols on Ancient Jewish Coins (Continued)," *JQR* 34 (1944): 299–312.

43 See, William F. Albright, "The Gezer Calendar," *BASOR* 92 (1943): 19–20.

the word “month” in lines 1, 2, and 6. If the suffix is dual, then the inscription depicts a twelve-month calendar. Daniel Sivan has reviewed the arguments for and against the dual suffix and concluded that, “it seems evident that the syntax of the Gezer Calendar employs the dual or singular suffix, followed by an appositive. This leads to a total of twelve months, and accounts for the linguistic and agricultural facts more satisfactory than the other solutions proposed.”⁴⁴ I agree with Albright, Cross, Freedman, and others that this inscription represents a twelve-month agricultural calendar.⁴⁵

ירחו אסף ירחו	1.	Two months of it: ingathering. Two months of it:
זרע ירחו לקש	2.	Sowing. Two months of it: late planting
ירח עצד פשת	3.	One month of hoeing flax ⁴⁶
ירח קצר שערמ	4.	One month of harvesting barley.
ירח קצר וכל	5.	One month of harvesting and measuring.
ירחו זמר	6.	Two months of it: pruning.
ירח קצ	7.	One month of summer fruit

Lines 1, 6, and 7 are the most pertinent to our study because they are concerned with horticulture. Line 1 denotes “two months of ingathering.” The ingathering occurred in the fall months (late August through early October), which was the beginning of the Canaanite calendar year. Borowski maintains that this reference is pertaining to the olive harvest, since olives can be harvested over several months, whereas grapes must be harvested within a few days.⁴⁷

Furthermore, line 6 specifies two months of vine pruning/tending (June/July). The vines were typically pruned once in the winter months (typically February) as well as the summer months, so it is not surprising that vine tending is mentioned in this time frame.⁴⁸ According to Walsh, “in the summer pruning, the leaves as well as branches are pruned so that the sun has greater access to the fruit in its last stage of growth to ripening in the fall.”⁴⁹ Finally,

44 Daniel Sivan, “The Gezer Calendar and Northwest Semitic Linguistics,” *IEJ* 48, no. 1/2 (1998): 105.

45 See, Frank M. Cross Jr. and David N. Freedman, *Early Hebrew Orthography: The Epigraphic Evidence* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1952), 46–47.

46 For translation “flax” see, Albright, “The Gezer Calendar,” 22.

47 See Borowski, *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel*, 59.

48 Cf. Stephen H. Langdon, *Babylonian Menologies and the Semitic Calendars* (London: British Academy, 1935), 35. Gustaf Dalman, *Arbet und Sitte in Palästina* (vol. 11; Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1932), 216–217.

49 Walsh, *Fruit of the Vine*, 38.

line 7 indicates a month for gathering the summer fruit, which would have included the grape harvest. Horticulture was clearly an intrinsic member of the agricultural cycle and the grape harvest was a contributing member in this carefully assigned crop rotation. The Gezer Calendar provides evidence for vine cultivation in Iron II Israel as part of the fall harvest period.

2.2.2 *Lmlk* Jar Handles

The *lmlk* jar handles were initially discovered in Jerusalem by C. Warren in 1869, yet since then countless more have been recovered in sites across the country, Lachish in particular. Examples of these stamps number over a thousand and were impressed with a symbol as well as the word *lmlk*, “to the king/belonging to the king.”⁵⁰ Many of the jar handles mention four cities: Hebron, Socoh, Ziph, and *mmšt*. The majority of the handles come from the same pottery house, probably near Lachish and are dated to the late eighth-early seventh centuries B.C.E.

The jars were commissioned by King Hezekiah before the destruction of the Northern Kingdom by Sennacherib in 701 B.C.E., but their exact function is not known.⁵¹ They may have been used for royal storage, rationing for the military, government taxation, or religious tithes. Since Hezekiah was preparing for an Assyrian invasion, it is most likely that their production was in connection to Sennacherib and the war against Assyria (according to 2 Kgs 18:31 and Isa 36:16, Jerusalem’s vineyards were threatened during the 701 BCE Assyrian siege). They have been discovered in sites across the country, so we can infer that they were moved to various regions within the country. Some have argued that the four names indicate royal vineyards, but this theory has been hard to prove since these jars have not been found at any of these sites.⁵²

Regardless of their exact *Sitz im Leben*, these jars attest to vast quantities of wine being transported to various locations in ancient Israel in the eighth century. Clearly, viticulture was not restricted to the local farming community, but was also connected to the Judean government. Royal vineyards are known from the biblical text. For instance, King David needed overseers for the royal

50 See Jonathan Rosenbaum, “Hezekiah King of Judah,” *ABD* 2: 189–193.

51 Cf. Gabriel Barkay and Andrew G. Vaughn, “New Readings of Hezekian Official Seal Impressions,” *BASOR* 304 (1996): 51. Also, David Ussishkin, “Royal Judean Storage Jars and Private Seal Impressions,” *BASOR* 223 (1976): 1–13. David Ussishkin, “The Destruction of Lachish by Sennacherib and the Dating of the Royal Storage Jars,” *TA* 4 (1977): 28–60.

52 See Anson F. Rainey, “Wine From the Royal Vineyards,” *BASOR* 245 (1982): 57–62.

vineyards as well as for the production of wine for the wine cellars (1 Chr 27:27). Wine making was a significant aspect of the culture at the local and royal levels.

2.2.3 Samaria Ostraca

The Samaria Ostraca were discovered by G.A. Reisner in 1910 while excavating the ancient site of Samaria. According to Anson F. Rainey, these ostraca consist of “66 pen-and-ink inscriptions on potsherds which record delivery of quality wine and fine oil to the capital city during the 9th, 10th, and 15th years of the king who was, in all probability, Jeroboam II (786–746 B.C.E.).”⁵³ These potsherds functioned as a type of administrative record and interestingly, almost all of the wine notations were written on reddish potsherds. The jars of wine and oil brought to Samaria by various “*l*-men” (to the credit of) may have been a form of taxation by Jeroboam II. These ostraca detail some of the more lavish exchanges of commodities among the people living in ancient Samaria in the eighth century. Aside from their significance for paleographic and historical value, they confirm once again that viticulture was a traded and even taxed commodity in ancient Israel.

2.2.4 Trade Outside Israel

Wine was not only consumed locally in ancient Israel, but was also sold or traded abroad. As was stated earlier in the chapter, wine was imported to Egypt from the Levant even after the Egyptians began their own vineyards along the Nile in the fourth millennium. Several ancient Egyptian inscriptions attest the presence of viticulture long before the biblical era. For example, one inscription dated to 2375 B.C.E., relates how the Egyptian military commander, Uni, during the reign of Pharaoh Pepi I, was sent to quell a revolt in Israel. One of the apparent missions of their exhibition was to destroy not only the fortresses, but the vines as well.⁵⁴ According to Thut-Moses III (1483–1450 B.C.E.), the people of Palestine gave the Pharaoh wine as well as other precious commodities at the surrender of Megiddo.⁵⁵

53 Anson F. Rainey, “The Samaria Ostraca in the Light of Fresh Evidence,” *PEQ* 99 (1967): 32–41. Also, Anston F. Rainey, “The Sitz im Leben of the Samaria Ostraca,” *TA* 6 (1979): 91–94. For a general introduction to the Samaria Ostraca, see Ivan T. Kaufman, “Samaria Ostraca,” *ABD* 5: 921–926.

54 See also, Paul Tresson, *L’Inscription d’Ouni, Publiée Avec Aperçu Grammatical* (Le Caire: Impr. de l’Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 1919).

55 Cf. Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East*, 233. James Henry Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt* (vol. 2; Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 440–441.

Two Phoenician shipwrecks dated to the eighth century B.C.E. were discovered in the Mediterranean Sea in 1997, west of Israel. These ships were filled with amphora jars containing wine on route to either Egypt or Carthage.⁵⁶ Even as late as the fifth century B.C.E., Herodotus mentions that, “shipments of wine in oriental jars were made to Egypt twice a year from all wine producing countries, including Phoenicia ...” (Hist. 3.6). The possession of wine as a commodity eagerly sought after for trade was a defining mark of the land of Canaan throughout history.

3 Agrarianism: The Ancient Israelite Worldview

The epigraphic and archaeological sources attest to the prominence of viticulture in Iron Age Israel. The biblical corpus also displays this paramount industry as a defining characteristic of the nation, as well as an image for the covenantal relationship. As an agrarian society, many of the images of the landscape, such as viticulture, became a symbol for the divine/human relationship as well. The interplay between agrarianism and metaphor development are closely associated in the biblical text. Therefore, an understanding of the natural world of ancient Israelite culture is an essential component of conceptual metaphor analysis.

Many biblical scholars before the 1980s attempted to dismiss the importance of agriculture and the deep connection to the natural environment that would have regulated the daily activities of an ancient Israelite.⁵⁷ These scholars desired to show a distinction between the early Hebrew people and their ancient Near Eastern pagan neighbors, especially other West Semitic peoples such as those from Ugarit.⁵⁸ The God of the Israelites has often been repre-

56 Robert D. Ballard et al, “Iron Age Shipwrecks in Deep Water off Ashkelon, Israel,” *AJA* 106 (2002): 151–168.

57 See especially, Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel, From Its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960). G. Ernest Wright, *Biblical Archaeology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957). Norman H. Snaith, *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament* (New York: Schocken Books, 1964). William F. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan: A Historical Analysis of Two Contrasting Faiths* (Garden City: Eisenbrauns, 1968). Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic: The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 300–315.

58 For most of the twentieth century there was a tendency among theologians, in particular, to argue for the supremacy of the biblical religion against the religion of other ancient near Eastern cultures. Even though a common cultural heritage was acknowledged, the

sented in scholarship as a god who acted on behalf of the people through specific historical deeds because he had a purpose to fulfill, an end game.⁵⁹ G. Ernest Wright, probably one of the more articulated writers on the importance of history to the biblical story, aimed to erase certain traces of paganism from ancient Israel's roots.

The Israelite knowledge of God, therefore, was not found in the first instance on the numinous awareness of nature, as was the case in polytheism. It was based on historical event. In polytheism the original and basic metaphors through which the divine was apprehended can be shown to have been derived from nature. In Israel the exact opposite is the case. Metaphors from nature, for the most part borrowed from Canaanite religion, were not the basic language by which God who had revealed himself through historical events could be described or apprehended.⁶⁰

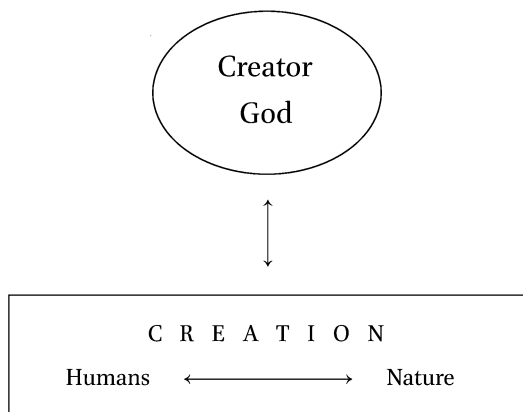
But, this theologically-motivated view does not hold up under the critical consideration of the metaphorical picture of the divine depicted in the Hebrew Bible. The biblical text abounds with divine metaphors affiliated with the natural world, such as storm-god, planter, shepherd, and even zoomorphic metaphors such as lion or eagle. Decisive historical events are an important facet of the biblical story, yet not at the expense of dismissing the predominant worldview of the people in an effort to divorce them from their pagan neighbors.

The previous two chapters established an ancient Near Eastern background to the divine planting imagery that greatly influenced the biblical metaphorical discourse. The divine as planter of the people and controller of the harvest was not exclusive to ancient Israel, but resonated as a cultural motif in the Levant and Mesopotamia. The surviving literatures of many of these ancient cultures describe and even depict pictorially chief deities as storm-gods. Even though much of biblical literature portrays YHWH as the sole god of the Israelites, this

Israelite god was portrayed as historically centered whereas the other gods operated primarily in nature. According to Greenstein, these scholars distinguished between two polar opposites: "a monotheistic Israel at one end and a polytheistic everyone else at the other end." Edward L. Greenstein, "God of Israel and Gods of Canaan: How Different Were They?" in *Proceedings of the Twelfth World Congress of Jewish Studies: The Bible and Its World* (Division A; Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1999), 47–58.

59 See Simkins, *Creator and Creation*, 8–10, for a more detailed analysis of this perspective.

60 G. Ernest Wright, *The Old Testament Against Its Environment* (Great Britain: Northumberland Press Ltd., 1957), 22.

FIGURE 9 *The basic Israelite worldview*

does not mean that his identity as a warrior and storm-god dissipated. YHWH was still the controller of the rainfall; he was still responsible for seed growth and for the bountiful harvest. His daily attentiveness to the soil was a symbol of his presence and this did not change just because ancient Israel was moving toward a monotheistic rather than a polytheistic outlook. Instead, vestiges of these attributes remain sprinkled throughout various sections of the Hebrew Bible and are often tied to metaphorical language associated with the natural environment.

Since our understanding of ancient Israelite society is often skewed by our modern technological instincts and our apparent dissociation from agricultural concerns, it may be helpful to illustrate the “worldview” of the ancient Israelites. Ronald A. Simkins has written quite extensively on nature and its role in the society of early Israel. He has diagrammed the basic Israelite worldview in his book *Creator and Creation* (see Figure 9).⁶¹

In this model of creation, both humans and nature are dependent upon the creator. Thus, there is a direct correlation between the two dependent categories of creation. Humans and nature are intricately linked in the biblical worldview. This is fascinating considering the biblical story chronicles the experiences of a group of slaves from Egypt who were given a piece of land to call their own. A land, deeply tied to their relationship with a generous god, as well as a source of livelihood.

The Song of the Sea gracefully illustrates the movement of a homeless people from bondage to bounteousness, all by the right hand of a powerful deity,

61 Redrawn from Simkins, *Creator and Creation*, 119.

YHWH. It was this god who brought the people out of the land of Egypt, out of slavery (Exod 20:2). The Hebrew people were then given a home at the exact place that YHWH established as his abode (Exod 15:17). This land was an incredible gift, but it came with a certain level of responsibility. According to Deuteronomy 28, the people were required to follow certain stipulations if they wanted to remain in the land and enjoy its blessings. Walter Brueggemann eloquently depicts this model; “Torah is Israel’s way of living gifted life. Torah-honoring leads to ‘success’ and ‘prosperity’ ... Torah exists so that Israel will not forget whose land it is and how it was given.”⁶² The landless people were given a lavish and ample land as well as instructions of how to live in that land.

It is interesting to note how many of the prescriptions in the Torah are concerned with land use and care. For example, there are ordinances in the Holiness Code (Leviticus 17–26) concerning the waiting time before planted fruit trees may be eaten (Lev 19:23–25), when to leave the land fallow and the vines un-pruned (Leviticus 25), what types of seeds are allowable for plantation (Lev 19:19), appropriate dietary laws (Lev 20:25), and proper care of animals (Lev 19:19; 24:18; 27:27). Lists and lists of regulations are periodically interjected with the following statement, “I am YHWH your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt” (Lev 19:36). This expression is repeated eight times in the nine chapters that make-up the Holiness Code (Lev 19:36; 22:33, 43; 25:38, 42, 55; 26:13, 45). The festival of booths, one of the three pilgrim festivals dictated by the Holiness Code, is even specified as a festival commemorating the exodus from Egypt. Clearly, YHWH’s role as the sole benefactor of the people was meant to be remembered. The land was a gift from the divine and therefore the resources were considered part of that gift.⁶³

Toward the end of the Holiness Code, YHWH promises the people abundance, protection, peace, and security if they follow his decrees: “If you follow my statutes and keep my commandments and observe them faithfully, I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its produce, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit” (Lev 26:4). He also promises to show them favor and to maintain his covenant with them (Lev 26:9). If, however, the people do not follow his commandments and break the covenant, he vows: “I in turn will do this to you: I will bring terror on you ... You shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies will eat it. I will set my face against you” (Lev 26:16–17a). YHWH threatens to make the sky like iron and the earth like copper (Lev 26:19).

62 Brueggemann, *Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in the Biblical Faith*, 61.

63 This idea that the land belongs to YHWH and that the first fruits are His, is also a theme of the Deuteronomist (Cf. Deut 6:23; 8:10; 9:6, 23, 28; 10:11; 11:9, 31; 12:1, 12:10, etc.).

The success of the land and the obedience of the people to the commandments were intertwined. Rain would not come down from the sky and the land would not produce food unless the relationship between YHWH and his people was in balance. The priestly writers of the Holiness Code and Deuteronomic law both describe a conditional relationship between the success of the land and the direct actions of the people based on the exodus tradition.⁶⁴

The prophetic literature follows a similar pattern, yet many of their warnings are incased in metaphorical language. The threat of expulsion from the land coupled with a barren and threatening landscape is depicted in a descriptive and often ornamental language, shrouded by the agricultural world that the ancient Israelites understood. For instance, the metaphor YHWH IS THE VINTNER OF ISRAEL is vividly portrayed in Isaiah 5 in the Song of the Vineyard. Chapter six will analyze this passage in detail, but “viticulture” as a source domain for this conceptual metaphor is noteworthy at this point in our study. The metaphorical picture of a vineyard as a representation of the relationship between YHWH and the people is intriguing because this society had such a vested interest in viticulture. The people were keenly aware of the steps involved in wine production and wine drinking was linked to celebration as well as national identity. Therefore, in order to understand the significance of viticulture as a metaphorical concept, an analysis of various wine prescriptions in the Hebrew Bible is warranted.

4 Viticulture in the Hebrew Bible

You cause the grass to grow for the cattle, and plants for people to use, to bring forth food from the earth, and wine to gladden the human heart, oil to make the face shine, and bread to strengthen the human heart.

Pss 104:14–15a

In Psalm 104, the psalmist praises the divine for providing not only the necessities such as meat and bread for nourishment, but also wine for enjoyment. The importance of viticulture in ancient Israel can be seen not only in the archaeological finds and paleographic documentation, but also in the numerous references to wine and wine making in the biblical text. Viticulture was a defining aspect of the land of Canaan even before the Israelites crossed the Jordan and the Israelite settlers quickly became experts in wine production.

64 See also, Deut 6:21–25; 8:1–19.

The first snapshot of Canaan that the biblical text portrays is marked by the presence of viticulture in the land. The spies that were sent by Moses to survey the “land” traveled to Canaan during the season of the grape harvest and they were amazed at the size of the grape clusters (Num 13:23). The single cluster of grapes that they cut from a vineyard in Wadi Eschol was so heavy that it had to be carried on a pole between two men. The grapes became an icon of the abundance of the land “flowing with milk and honey” (Num 14:8b). YHWH brought the people out of Egypt where wine was a commodity reserved for royalty or the very wealthy. Wine production was especially difficult to maintain in climates where there is little rainfall, so the ancient Egyptians imported most of their wine from the Levant and Phoenicia until vineyards were developed along the Nile delta in the fourth millennium BCE.⁶⁵ In contrast, the land beyond the Jordan River was overflowing with lush grapes, milk, and honey.

The first mention of viticulture in the Hebrew Bible occurs right after the flood narrative in the primeval history. According to this tradition, Noah was a man of the soil and was the first person to plant a vineyard after reaching dry land (Gen 9:20).⁶⁶ The powerful storm-god promised to control the amount of rain that fell from the sky and Noah, in return, planted a vineyard. Viticulture is also mentioned in Genesis in conjunction with the blessing of Judah. Before Isaac’s death, he drank wine and blessed Jacob saying, “may God give you the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine” (Gen 27:27–29). Likewise, when Jacob blessed Judah, he predicted that his son would acquire such an abundance of choice wine that he would be able to wash his garments in the liquid (Gen 49:11). Joseph must have known something about vineyards too, since he was able to interpret the chief butler’s dream while in prison (Gen 40:10). The availability and consumption of wine is clearly not absent from the patriarchal narratives.

Viticulture was also tied to religious practices and the temple cult. For instance, the people were instructed to offer the first fruits of the vine to God, but ultimately it was the Levitic priests who drank the libation as part of their service to the divine (Deut 18:4; Num 18:12). The priests, however, were forbidden to drink when they were in the inner courts (Lev 10:9; Ezek 44:21). Wine was also a part of the daily offering and the amount of wine offered was

65 Wine was produced in Egypt near the Nile delta at the beginning of Dynasty I (ca. 3000 B.C.E.). The Egyptians probably obtained wine grafts from the Levant to start their vineyards. Before this time period, wine was imported to Egypt. See McGovern, *Uncorking the Past*, 180.

66 According to Gen 8:4, the ark came to rest on, “the mountains of Ararat.” Interestingly, Mt. Ararat is in Anatolia, where viticulture may have originated.

more on the Sabbath than the other days of the week (Lev 23:9–13; Num 28–29). The new moon offering was a drink offering of wine. Furthermore, all burnt offerings and peace offering required a libation of wine. Isaiah 62:8–9 envisions a time when wine would be consumed by the people in the temple courts and not by foreign subjugators. In the Second Temple period, Josephus mentions that there was a golden vine engraved over the entrance to the Sanctuary with grape-clusters as tall as a man.⁶⁷ Since viticulture was a mainstay of the local economy, it is only natural that it would become relevant in the religious sphere as well.

The potent and often dangerous side effects of wine consumption are also mentioned in the Hebrew Bible. For instance, Noah, after planting a vineyard becomes intoxicated and his nakedness is exposed to his sons (Gen 9:21–22). Not only Noah, but Lot, Uriah, Elah, and King Ben-hadad were all depicted inebriated in the literature. Proverbs 23:32 compares drinking too much alcohol to being bitten by a poisonous serpent, including blurred vision and strange thoughts.⁶⁸ A surplus of wine was considered a blessing, but consuming too much often resulted in regrettable circumstances for all parties involved. In spite of the dangers involved in the imbibed drink, wine was the drink of choice in countless biblical stories and was “drunk on week days as freely as during feasts.”⁶⁹

Wine is also mentioned in the Hebrew Bible as one of the staples in the Israelite agrarian diet. Jack M. Sasson, who catalogued the vocabulary for viticulture and wine production in the Hebrew Bible, describes how wine was used on a daily basis. For instance, “wine was the beverage supplied to wives (Hos 2:7), offered to palace servants (Dan 10:3), and commonly served with meals.”⁷⁰ Several passages in Deuteronomy pair wine and grain or wine, olive oil, and grain together. Wine, olive oil, and grain formed the staple agricultural products of the fields and could be grown in rotation throughout the year. In this way, the Israelite farmer was able to make use of the land throughout the year as well as provide the necessary food and drink for his family. Grain would have been harvested in the spring and the fruit trees in the autumn. Each of these commodities could be stored for use throughout the year, so they became

67 *Bell. Jud.* 5:210; *Ant. Jud.* 15:395. Also see, Brown, “Mediterranean Vocabulary of the Vine,” 170, for more information on how the golden vine was described by Josephus, Pliny, and writings from the Mishnah.

68 Cf. Isa 5:11; Hos 4:11; Jer 23:9; Hab 2:5; Eccl 2:3; Prov 20:1; Isa 29:1, for other negative effects of wine.

69 Goor, “History of the Grape-Vine,” 48.

70 Sasson, “The Blood of Grapes,” 399–419, 402.

staples for the ancient Israelite community, especially during the cold winter months. Furthermore, access to water was very limited in ancient Israel and water often contained contaminants, so wine became a safer alternative. The fermentation process killed the bacteria found in water, so people who drank wine were protected from many water-borne diseases. Wine was the primary drink for celebration during the harvest, but it was also a drink of nourishment.

The fall wine harvest was such an important part of the culture that Deuteronomic law dictated that men were exempt from going to war if they had not enjoyed the harvest of their grapes (Deut 20:6). The grape harvest was a time of celebration not just for grape maturation, but also for the blessings of the year as a whole. The biblical text also indicates that when people traveled, it was wine that they took along with them for the journey (2 Sam 16:1–2). Again, this was due to the scarcity of drinkable water in the area.

Wine was integral to many aspects of ancient Israelite life and culture, yet there were some groups who abstained from drinking the substance. For instance, the Nazirites, a subset of the people who had vowed never to drink fermented drinks or cut their hair, were not even allowed to eat grapes in case fermentation had occurred (Num 6). Even Samson's mother was commanded not to drink wine while she was pregnant because he was going to be a Nazirite. The Rechabites, who are said to have come into the land with the Israelites, are represented as a group of nomadic people who abstained from fermented drinks and did not participate in viticulture.⁷¹ Jeremiah offered them wine to drink yet they refused based on their cultural heritage (Jeremiah 35). YHWH commended this group for their obedience to their ancestor Jonadab, whereas Israel was chastised for unfaithfulness to the covenant God made with their ancestors (Jer 35:13–16). Most people drank wine daily, but there were a few groups who abstained because of their heritage.

While beer was the drink of choice in Mesopotamia and ancient Egypt, the drinking of beer is absent from the biblical text. Instead, wine was the fermented drink that the biblical text specifies the people drank once they entered the land. The geographical location of the southern Levant played a major role in this development. Ancient Israel falls within the Mediterranean zone, which includes Greece and Italy. Grapevines flourished in these climates and required less water than beer to produce. Furthermore, the cultivation of a vineyard required considerable time and investment from the farmer.

71 For more information about the Rechabites and their origins, see Frank S. Frick, "The Rechabites Reconsidered," *JBL* 90 (1971): 279–287.

The text depicts a landless, nomadic Hebrew people quickly transitioning to a settled, sedentary group characterized by their exquisite wines. They then became master vintners, churning out an abundance of wine from their family vineyards while servants contributed to the production of wine in the royal vineyards.

5 Wine Enjoyment

Eat, friends, drink, and be drunk with love.

Song 5:1

Wine making was a delicate and often painstaking process, yet the end result warranted the months of laboring. The vintage harvest was a time of celebration in ancient Israel and was often accompanied by music, dancing and even weddings. Songs were sung and shouts were raised and God was praised (Isa 62:9; Joel 2:24–26; Isa 16:10). The grape harvest ended the agricultural year and was celebrated in conjunction with the festival of the “ingathering of fruit” (Exod 23:16; 34:22), later known as the festival of booths (Deut 16:13). This was a joyous time for the vintner and his family, a time for recognizing the blessings of the year.

The festival of the ingathering/booths lasted for seven days in late September-early October and was one of the three pilgrim festivals associated with the Jerusalem temple. At this time, the first fruits of the vine would have been brought to the temple and offered to the priests. King Solomon dedicated the Jerusalem temple during this festival (1Kgs 8:2), so some scholars have argued that this festival was also a yearly “enthronement” feast as well.⁷² The Holiness Code dictates that the reason for the booths is so that the people will always remember that YHWH brought them out of Egypt (Lev 23:42–43). The land was a gift and the grape harvest was a specific time of year indicated for remembrance. Regardless if the festival became associated with an act of remembrance or entailed certain cultic prescriptions regarding YHWH’s enthronement, this feast was agricultural in origin, coinciding with the grape harvest.

The “shout of the wine” (יִרְעָע יין) or “vintage-shout” was a familiar sound during the grape harvest (Isa 16:10). Joshua Schwartz maintains that the shouts

72 See Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship* (trans. D.R. AP-Thomas; vol. 1; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962), 130 ff.

of the wine treader “were an imitation of the sounds of thunder and rain associated with Divine blessing and theoretically supposed to encourage the Divinity to shower his blessings on the grape crop and the on the wine.”⁷³ If some sort of rain dance was accompanied by the vintage shouting, then this act could be considered a vestige of YHWH’s predominance as a storm-god within ancient Israelite society. The “shout of the wine” is also attributed to YHWH the warrior in Jer 25:30. In this passage, the prophet warns that YHWH will “shout like those who tread grapes,” but these shouts will not be shouts of joy, but of anger and disappointment against all the nations. The singing shouts at the grape harvest were associated with celebration, yet the prophetic literature also portrays these sounds in a negative light, the shouts of a betrayed deity.

Aside from vintage singing, instruments were also played while the grapes were harvested. Paintings on Egyptian tombs from the third-first millennium B.C.E. depict the treading of grapes accompanied by music.⁷⁴ The timbrel and flute are two instruments that are often associated with festive occasions. For example, Miriam and the women played the timbrel and danced to commemorate YHWH’s victory at the Sea (Exod 15:20). The placement of the ark in Jerusalem also initiated music and dance, including King David himself. In the Song of the Vineyard, the lyre, harp, timbrel, and flute are all mentioned in conjunction with a wine-drinking feast. Music heightened the celebration and since the harvesting of the grapes was such a joyous occasion, a musical accompaniment would have been commonplace.

Women were also participants in the vintage celebrations. For example, in Judg 21:21, women are portrayed dancing in a vineyard. The Mishnah (*Ta’an* 4.8) states that on the 15th of Ab, the daughters of Jerusalem went forth to dance in the vineyards. The woman in Proverbs 31 is portrayed as a vineyard owner and the female heroine in the Song of Songs was a caretaker of a vineyard (Song 1:6). The author of this text was also well versed in the vocabulary associated with viticulture, even claiming that love was better than wine. Furthermore, women drank wine along with the men according to several passages in the Hebrew Bible (Ruth 2:14; 1Sam 1:9; Job 1:13, to name a few). In contrast, women in Greek and Roman culture were often excluded from drinking wine, especially in public. For instance, Pliny mentions that women were not allowed to drink in Rome (Natural History 14.89). Therefore, it is interesting that the biblical text does not have any prohibitions against drinking wine. Since viticulture was

73 Schwartz, “Treading the Grapes of Wrath, 217.

74 Painting in Greek vases and Roman reliefs also depict musical instruments near grape treading. See Frankel, *Wine and Old Production in Antiquity*, 42.

such an essential aspect of the family social life, it only makes sense that the women were also allowed to enjoy the fermented drink. The festival of the first fruits was a weeklong celebration and women were active participants in the festivities.

Vineyards were not the only location for communal wine consumption and merrymaking. Banquets also served as venues for mass dissipation of choice wine. The book of Esther recounts such a banquet and the eventual demise of the queen because she would not comply with the drunken requests of the king. From LBA Ugaritic sources we learn that the dead were often honored in a ritual cultic banquet (*Marzeah*) where mass drunkenness ensued. There is a hint of this same type of banquet in Jer 16:5–9 (בֵּית מַרְזֵחַ). Here, the prophet Jeremiah is warned that he should not go to the “house of mourning” for the impending destruction of the people. Wine consumption was clearly a social rite associated with weddings, funerals, times of celebration and mourning, as well as the vintage harvest.

At Ugarit, which shared a favorable climate for wine making with ancient Israel, the gods were also known to own vineyards. This may be gathered from KTU 1.22:1.17–20, “where the spirits are offered an excellent wine which is said to be must-dew grown [*hrt*] by a god.”⁷⁵ There are many episodes in the Ugaritic literature that describe the drinking celebrations of the gods. Baal was able to drink a thousand pitchers of wine and he often craved wine to drink. The apparent interest in wine drinking necessitated the need for wine-making facilities. The texts even specify, “that in their vineyards the gods had an installation for pressing the grapes, as had human winegrowers. This appears from a passage according to which the gods have to pour sparkling wine into the wine sink [*qbt*].”⁷⁶ Feasts were often accompanied by wine drinking and so this social marker is reflected in the literature as well. The grape harvest was a celebratory juncture, as witnessed from biblical and Ugaritic texts.

6 Conclusion

You brought a vine out of Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it.

Pss 80:7

⁷⁵ Korpel, *Rift in the Clouds*, 437.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 437. See KTU 1.6: IV.18.

Wine production was a prevailing symbol of ancient Israelite culture. The land was fertile and the climate was ideal for viticulture. The Canaanites and Phoenicians were exporters of this fine commodity long before the biblical era, yet the Israelite farmers also contributed to the wine industry through innovations such as terracing. Vine tending was tedious and required years of patient pruning, but the end result brought pleasure and became a staple drink for the people. The landless people were given a home and one of the marks of their movement away from a nomadic lifestyle was the commitment to the family vineyard. The grape harvest marked the end of the agricultural year, so the vintage became a time of celebration. To be able to enjoy the fruit of the vine was a sign of prosperity and peace; “they ate and drank and were happy” (1 Kgs 4:20).

The emphasis on viticulture in ancient Israel contributed to the metaphorical mapping of the people as vines and YHWH as the planter of the vineyard. The use of vine imagery as a metaphor in biblical Israel is directly linked to the emphasis on viticulture within the everyday experiences of the people. I agree with Meir Weiss that metaphor utilizes, “images and combinations of ideas which are taken from the world of external reality and from the store of human expressions which are a part of man’s universal heritage, in part the heritage of the cultural traditions of generations.”⁷⁷ Viticulture was a thriving component of the cultural heritage of the ancient Israelites and this image seeps into the metaphorical dialogue of the biblical authors as well.

The prophets drew from agricultural terminology to convey the evolving relationship between YHWH and the people. The Hebrew Bible is therefore latent with images of wine production because the prophets themselves were well versed in the actual mechanics of the grape harvesting from initial planting to fermentation. Viticulture was the pride of the land and so the people described as the “vine” that YHWH brought out of Egypt and planted, further reiterates their claims to this new homeland.

Metaphors express cultural understandings. The ancient Israelite cultural milieu was heavily entrenched in wine production, so metaphors concerning this same process began to be likened to the relationship between the divine and the people: when this relationship is flourishing, the vine is vibrant and there is abundance in the land; when this relationship is broken, the vine suffers too. The three Babylonian campaigns against Judah (597, 586, and 581 B.C.E.), as well as the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E., ripped the vine from its roots. If YHWH planted a choice vine in a promised land, how does this metaphor

77 Weiss, *Bible From Within*, 33.

fare after these tragic events? This metaphor continues to not only represent a barometer of the health of the covenantal relationship, but it also continues to be a dominant image for the Jewish people. The subsequent three chapters will explore the image of the people as a vine throughout biblical history.

PART 2

*Hebrew Bible References to the Divine
as Planter/Vintner of the People*



The Vintner and His ‘Stinking Grapes’

When I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield stinking grapes?¹

Isa 5:4b



Viticulture was a fundamental component of the agricultural backbone of ancient Israel. The vintage also became a symbol of the luxurious lifestyle that so many enjoyed, the wealthy in particular. Interestingly, the grape vine became a conceptual tool for the prophetic oracles of this time period. Chapter four analyzed the planting metaphor within its ancient Near Eastern cultural milieu. The iconographic and textual evidence illustrates that planting imagery, especially metaphors affiliated with storm-gods as planters of the people, can be found throughout ancient Mesopotamia as well as the Levant. Exodus 15 demonstrates this particular metaphor within biblical literature. According to this ancient song, YHWH planted his people on the mountain where he dwelled (Exod 15:17). This text commemorates the point in time when the ancient Israelites were planted and given a land to call their own. Canaan was known for its luxuriant vines and so the inhabitants began to be associated not only with planting imagery, but more specifically with vine imagery.

The complex metaphor YHWH IS THE VINTNER OF ISRAEL illuminates a narrower snapshot of ancient Israelite culture. Since language is conditioned by environment as well as social factors, studying the metaphors within the literature of a culture can be a powerful tool in comprehending various aspects of society at a given time. Chapter five surveyed the archaeological picture of viticulture in ancient Israel as well as the biblical portrayal of this industry. Wine production was a significant feature of the agricultural cycle as well as a lucrative trade export in Iron Age Israel. Viticulture was more prevalent in the Levant than in other ancient Near Eastern Cultures in the Iron Age, so metaphors using this imagery would be more appropriate in this setting than somewhere else.

¹ “Stinking grapes” could also be translated “wild grapes.”

Metaphors are shaped by two factors: physical environment and social context. Since ancient Israel was an agrarian based society, most metaphorical language stems from the physical landscape. For example, the prophetic literature is saturated with appeals, often in the form of metaphor, petitioning the people to reconcile their relationship with the divine. This often includes insistence that some change is made, especially regarding acts of social injustice or the worship of foreign deities. Frequently, these metaphors are drawn from the natural environment because their lives depended on an ecological balance between the necessary rainfall for a bountiful harvest verses drought or even inundation. Since YHWH was ultimately thought to be in control of this delicate balance, the divine/human relationship became intrinsically linked on several levels. The desiccation of the land was associated with divine wrath whereas agricultural abundance symbolized divine favor.

This chapter will survey the emergence and development of the complex metaphor YHWH IS THE VINTNER OF ISRAEL throughout biblical literature, paying particular attention to the prophetic literature (see Table 2). The metaphor of YHWH as the “vintner” and the people as the “vine” became one of the symbols of the health of the divine/human relationship, as well as a barometer for measuring the level of social justice in the land. Since viticulture was linked to the social, economic, and cultic spheres, this metaphor spoke to all levels of society. The image of the people of Israel as grapevines is sprinkled throughout prophetic oracles particularly in the eighth century B.C.E. and even later texts drew on this particular association.² The Song of the Vineyard in Isaiah 5 exemplifies this metaphor meticulously, although it may not be the earliest portrayal of this idea. Much of this literature has gone through a rather complex editorial process, yet this particular metaphor follows a trajectory paralleling the growth of the wine industry in ancient Israel.

2 I contend that the late Judahite monarchy (eighth and seventh centuries B.C.E.) was the period of time when most of the pre-exilic biblical texts were written down. Prov 25:1 suggests that during the reign of King Hezekiah, proverbs were copied down. Many of the oral traditions, such as the early poetry, were also probably compiled at this time. The urbanization of Jerusalem in the late eighth century facilitated this process. Jerusalem became a large state during this time as refugees from the north fled to the city due to the Assyrian campaigns. This created an ideal context for centralization of power and a written history. For a detailed analysis of the social and economic circumstances that facilitated scribal schools and attracted literary composition, see William M. Schniedewind, “Jerusalem, the Late Judahite Monarchy, and the Composition of the Biblical Texts,” in *Jerusalem in Bible and Archaeology: The First Temple Period* (ed. A.G. Vaughn and A.E. Killebrew; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 2003), 375–393.

The metaphor of YHWH as the vintner of ancient Israel has its roots in planting imagery, the Song of the Sea often cited as capturing a joyous moment of conception for a homeless people. There are also a few other passages in the Hebrew Bible that depict people as plants in a favorable light (e.g. Num 24:6), but this all changes with the eighth century prophets. The prime example of this shift is depicted in the Song of the Vineyard (Isa 5:1–7). Here, the speaker expresses disillusionment and frustration for “the pleasant planting” because they did not live up to the stipulations of the covenant and produced “stinking grapes” rather than choice wine. Deuteronomy 11:16–17 and Lev 26:19 specify that there will be no rain and the land will not yield fruit if the covenant with YHWH is violated. These stipulations are revisited in Isaiah 5 as YHWH proclaims that there will be no rain and the land will become an arid wasteland (vs. 6) because the people have strayed from the commandments. Much of the language associated with this metaphor expresses disappointment with the vine(yard) because it was given all the resources necessary to thrive, but instead produced an unusable harvest.

Post-exilic references to the metaphor of the vineyard are not as prolific as pre-exilic. Instead, plant imagery rather than vine imagery re-emerges in the metaphorical discourse and the “remnant” are portrayed as a plant within in a lush garden-like atmosphere (these references will be explored in detail in chapter seven). Viticulture metaphors shaped the language at a certain point in Israel and Judah’s history, namely the late monarchical period, when the wine industry was generating an enormous profit.

1 Early Vine Imagery

There are only a few instances of pre-exilic divine planting imagery outside of the eighth and seventh century prophetic literature and these examples depict the people as “plants” more frequently than as “vines.” For example, in Exod 15:17, the people are planted by YHWH, but the text does not specify if they were vines or not. The Balaam Oracles (Numbers 22–24), the Jotham Fable (Judg 9:7–15), and the Dynastic Oracle (2Sam 7:10) are the other three texts that portray people as plants. There are a few psalms that also adopt this imagery (Pss 44:1–2; Pss 80:7), but these are much more difficult to date.³

3 Ps. 80:7–13 is an extended poetic section with affinities to the Song of the Vineyard (Isa 5:1–7). Several scholars (e.g. Gunkel and Begrich) have assumed an eighth century B.C.E. date for this psalm due to the references to the Joseph and Benjamin tribes, composed in Northern

TABLE 2 *Early planting imagery in the Hebrew Bible*

Exod 15:17a	You brought them in and planted them on the mountain of your own possession.
Num 24:5–7a	How fair are your tents, O Jacob, your encampments, O Israel! Like palm-groves that stretch far away, like gardens beside a river, like aloes that YHWH has planted , like cedar trees beside the waters. Water shall flow from his buckets, and his seed shall have abundant water.
Deut 29:28	YHWH uprooted them from their land in anger, fury, and great wrath, and cast them into another land, as is now the case.
2 Sam 7:10	And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more.
Isa 5:1b–7a	My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He dug it, cleared it of stones , and planted it with choice vines ; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; he expected it to yield grapes , but it yielded sour grapes ... I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed , and it shall be overgrown with briers and thorns ; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of YHWH of hosts is the house of Israel , and the people of Judah are his pleasant planting .
Isa 5:24	Therefore, as the tongue of fire devours the stubble and as dry grass sinks down in the flame, so their root will become rotten , and their blossom go up like dust ; for they have rejected the instruction of YHWH of hosts.

The image of the people as a vine(yard) became a theme of the writings of the eighth century writing prophets (Amos, Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah of Jerusalem). Viticulture was a burgeoning industry in ancient Israel at this time, linked to corruption and exploitation of the poor by the wealthy. The prophets used a symbol of prestige and affluence, the wine industry, to convey divine disappointment and anger. Even though there are several texts that link viticulture to abundance and prosperity in the biblical literature (see chapter 5, heading 5), the successive metaphorization of the people as vines is predominantly portrayed negatively in the literature.

Israel before the Assyrian campaigns. But it may have also been composed during the time of Josiah (e.g. Kraus and Schmidt). See Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51–50* (WBC 20; Mexico City: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2000), 309.

1.1 *The Balaam Oracles (Num 22–24)*

The Balaam Oracles (Numbers 22–24) depict the sayings of a unique prophet, Balaam son of Beor, who blessed Israel prior to its entrance into the land.⁴ According to the text, he was not an Israelite, yet he is attributed with speaking the words of YHWH. In Numbers 24, he equates the nation of Israel with thriving plants along a river: “like palm-groves that stretch far away, like gardens beside a river, like aloes that the Lord has planted, like cedar trees beside the waters” (Num 24:6). The planting imagery used here depicts an idyllic location, where lush gardens span out as far as the eye can see with waters running alongside. Just as YHWH planted a garden in Genesis 2, he is portrayed as the planter of a thriving nation as well.

Even though Balaam was commissioned by Balak, the king of Moab to curse Israel, Balaam was not able to curse the nation. Instead, he blessed Israel because he could not “curse whom God has not cursed” (Num 23:8). The people are likened to palm-groves, a garden, aloes, and cedar trees, but not vines in this passage. Since Balaam was not from Canaan, he may not have been as familiar with viticulture imagery. Therefore, the more commonplace plant and tree imagery is invoked. The planting imagery in this passage, however, does depict the people in a favorable light as the people that YHWH chose to bring out of Egypt (Num 23:21).

1.2 *The Jotham Fable (Judg 9:7–15)*

The Jotham Fable (משל) narrates an imaginary story about talking plants, representing the peoples’ desire for kingship.⁵ After Gideon passed away, his son Abimelech wanted to be king even though his father was against kingship (Judg 8:22–23). So, he elicited the support of the people of Shechem and killed all of his brothers except Jotham, who barely escaped. Jotham then told the people a story about trees and their attempt to anoint a king for them-

4 See William F. Albright, “The Oracles of Balaam,” *JBL* 63 (1944): 207–233, for a comparison of the grammar, lexicography and epigraphy of these poems with Northwest Semitic grammar. Albright concluded that, “Balaam was really a North-Syrian diviner from the Euphrates Valley, that he spent some time at the Moabit court, that he became a convert to Yahwism, and that he later abandoned Israel and joined the Midianites in fighting against the Yahwists (Num 31:8, 16). We may also infer that the Oracles preserved in Numbers 23–24 were attributed to him from a date as early as the twelfth century, and that there is no reason why they may not be authentic, or may not at least reflect the atmosphere of his age” (233).

5 This passage could also fall under the broader category of *mashal* (משל), a comparison. In the Hebrew literature, *mashal* can include everything from proverb to allegory and even metaphor.

selves.⁶ An olive tree, fig tree, and vine are all asked to be the ruler, but refuse. The vine declined on the grounds that he would not be able to produce wine “that cheers gods and mortals” (Judg 9:13). This story does not specify that the vine is the nation of Israel, but it is interesting that the olive tree, fig tree, and vine were the most common fruit producing trees in ancient Israel. Furthermore, wine is highlighted as a drink that gladdens not only mortals, but the gods as well. In the Hebrew Bible, God is never mentioned drinking wine, but ancient Near Eastern mythological texts highlight the importance of wine to the pantheon (see chapter 5, heading 5).

Jotham likened Abimelech to the briar/desert thorn (אטד) in the fable, meaning that his leadership would lead to the demise of the people. Interestingly, in the Song of the Vineyard (Isa 5:1–7) the Israelites are depicted as a vineyard that is left overgrown with briars and thorns (שמיר ושיט) because of their corruption. The word choice is different in these two texts, but the imagery is representative of the agricultural picture of ancient Israel. Those who do not possess divine favor were metaphorically the same as a desert wasteland, causing more harm than good.

1.3 *The Dynastic Oracle (2 Sam 7:10)*

The Dynastic Oracle (2 Sam 7:1–17), which discusses the legitimacy of the Davidic kingship, echoes divine planting imagery from Exod 15:

ושמתי מקום לעמי לישראל ונטעתי ושכן תחתיו ולא ירגו עוד

And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more.

2 Sam 7:10a

The oracle specifies that David would be given rest and God himself would build a house for David's heir. The deliberate choice of words in the Dynastic Oracle: YHWH as a planter of the people of Israel, recognition that this planting will occur in a specific location, the mention of rest, and the building of a house for Yahweh, are clearly allusions to Exod 15:17. The purpose of this allusion was to bolster the political strategy of the united monarchy, namely that the place

6 This story is often compared to Sumerian “contest literature” because it follows a similar structure: introduction, mythological-etiological introduction, the circumstance that prompted the debate, and the debate itself. There was typically a judgment scene at the end before a god. See Silviu Tatu, “Jotham’s Fable and the ‘Crux Interpretum’ in Judges 1x,” VT 56, Fasc. 1 (2006): 109.

of planting referred to in Exodus 15 is Jerusalem and the Davidic line should be the responsible party for the building of the sanctuary. The promise to David illustrates how specific vocabulary from the Song of the Sea was used to create a new discourse in the Israelite community.⁷ The divine planting imagery served as a unifying factor for the developing nation.

1.4 *Conclusion to Early Vine Imagery*

The literature illustrating divine planting imagery in the Hebrew Bible typically likens the people to a planting of YHWH. This association is portrayed positively and is often associated with the idea that YHWH brought the people out of Egypt (Exod 15:17; 2 Sam 7:10; Num 24:8; Pss 80:7) and planted them in a specific place. The portrayal of the Israelites as a vine(yard), however, does not convey the same positivity. The vine(yard) image became a motif of the eighth century prophets who masterfully crafted a polemic against the ruling and wealthy elite using terminology from the economy's dependence on wine production. Even though the Song of the Vineyard (Isa 5:1–7) develops this image in great detail, the writings of Hosea may be the earliest depiction of this motif. The Song of the Vineyard is an important starting point for a discussion of the vine metaphor. An analysis of this song will serve as the catalyst for the vine imagery imbedded within the oracles of Amos, Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah of Jerusalem.

2 *The Song of the Vineyard (Isa 5:1–7)*

The Song of the Vineyard is a showpiece of Hebrew poetic style. Repetitive parallelism, fluctuation of speaker voice, the ability to evoke a variety of emotions, and the development of a vivid metaphor, resonate from these seven verses of Hebrew scripture. According to Hannes Olivier, “virtually all of the outstanding features of Hebrew poetry are employed: wordplay, assonance, alliteration, rhetoric and chiasmic structure, alternation of accelerating or retarding tension, different metric accents, variance in tone and mood, etc.”⁸ The singer uses a myriad of poetic devices to construct and dismantle an image of ancient Israel

⁷ See William M. Schniedewind, *Society and Promise to David: The Reception History of 2 Samuel 7:1–17* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 34, for the dating of this oracle.

⁸ Olivier, “God as Friendly Patron,” 294. For surveys of the various genres proposed for this text see the following, Hans Wildeberger, *Jesaja* (BKAT 10; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1980), 166. A. Schoors, *Jesaja* (De Boeken van het Oude Testament; Roermond: Romen & Zonen, 1972), 50. H. Niehr, “Zur Gattung von Jes. 5: 1–7,” *BZ* 30 (1986): 99–104.

as a people planted by a divine vintner. The song opens with language reminiscent of a wedding elegy, yet closes with images of devastation and woe, more typical of a funeral song.⁹ The literary unity of the song is unchallenged, although this may be the only accordance that scholars share regarding this piece of literature.¹⁰

Even though the Song of the Vineyard has been labeled a “poetic masterpiece of Old Testament Literature,” it is still one of the most complex songs in the Hebrew Bible.¹¹ Over a century of scholarship has produced more than 12 different *Gattungen* for Isa 5:1–7.¹² This song has been categorized as a parable,¹³ a love song,¹⁴ a lawsuit or complaint,¹⁵ a fable,¹⁶ a song of a disappointed husband/lover,¹⁷ and an allegory,¹⁸ to name just a few proposed genres. Most scholars identify several genres within the seven verses, a “song” or “parable”

9 See Watts, *Isaiah* 1–33, 87.

10 Ibid., 83. Cf. Willis, “The Genre of Isaiah 5:1–7,” 337. Willem S. Prinsloo, “Isaiah 5:1–7: A Synchronic Approach,” in *Studies in Isaiah* (ed. W.C. van Wyk; OTWSA 22–23; Pretoria: NHW Press, 1981), 184.

11 Otto Kaiser, *Das Buch des Propheten Jesaja* (ATD 17; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981), 96.

12 Willis, “The Genre of Isaiah 5:1–7,” 337–362. And, Marjo C.A. Korpel, “The Literary Genre of the Song of the Vineyard: (Isa 5:1–7),” in *The Structural Analysis of Biblical and Canaanite Poetry* (JSOTSup 74; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press Ltd., 1988), 119–155, for a detailed analysis of the various genres proposed. Niehr, “Gattung von Jes. 5:1–7, 99–104,” for another summary of the various proposed genres.

13 Many scholars consider the second half of the song a parable based on its comparison with 2 Sam 12:1–7a. Cf. Willis, “The Genre of Isaiah 5:1–7,” 359. Franz Delitzsch, *Das Buch Jesaja* (Leipzig, 1889), 103. John S. Kloppenborg, “Egyptian Viticultural Practices and the Citation of Isa 5:1–7 in Mark 2:1–9,” *NovT* 44 (2002): 137. Bernhard Duhm, *Das Buch Jesaja* (Göttingen, 1922), 54.

14 H. Schmidt, *Die Grossen Propheten übersetzt und erklärt* (Die Schriften des Alten Testaments 11/2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1923), 40. H. Junker, “Die Literarische Art von Isa 5, 1–7,” *Bib* 40 (1959): 263.

15 G.A. Yee, “A Form-Critical Study of Isaiah 5:1–7 as a Song and a Juridical Parable,” *CBQ* 43 (1981): 30–40. G.T. Sheppard, “More on Isaiah 5:1–7 as a Juridical Parable,” *CBQ* 44 (1982): 45–47.

16 Hermann Gunkel, *The Folktales in the Old Testament* (trans. M.D. Rutter; Sheffield: Almond Press, 1987). Schottroff argues that the legal language in this song is comparable to Sumerian and Akkadian dispute-poems. W. Schottroff, “Das Weinberglied Jesajas (Jes 5,1–7),” *ZAW* 82 (1970): 68–91.

17 Aage Bentzen, “Zur Erläuterung von Jesaja 5,1–7,” *AfO* 4 (1927): 209–210.

18 P. Höffken, “Probleme in Jesaja 5,1–7,” *ZTK* 79 (1982): 409. The targums on Isaiah also depict this song allegorically.

being the two most consistent genres depicted.¹⁹ Even though the Hebrew Bible designates these verses as a "song" (שִׁיר), many scholars refer to Isa 5:1–7 as the "Parable of the Vineyard" in their work. For the purposes of this study, I will refer to Isaiah 5 as a "song," since this is what the text specifies as its genre (vs. 1). The categorization of biblical "genres" does not typically fit the mold of our modern notions of literature classifications, so there may never be an agreement on the specific genre(s) of this song.²⁰

The *Sitz im Leben* of the song is another greatly debated subject. The setting has been depicted as a vintage feast either at the Jerusalem temple or in the northern countryside,²¹ a wedding or prenuptial song,²² a drinking song possibly associated with the Marzeah feast,²³ a song of self-condemnation,²⁴ a court of justice,²⁵ or even a song depicting fertility rites.²⁶ The opening of the song: "my beloved had a vineyard," may have been a popular line of a song that the audience was familiar with, possibly a wedding song.²⁷ Weddings

19 Georg Fohrer, *Die Propheten des Alten Testaments* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Mohn, 1974) 107.

20 According to Robert Alter, "songs and hymns of the Bible were not written in quantitative meters, as were the songs of ancient Greeks, nor do they have regular rhyme or alliterative patterns, as do the songs of many other peoples." *Art of Biblical Poetry*, 1. Therefore, I find it more valuable to compare biblical poetry to ancient Near Eastern poetry rather than force biblical verse to conform to modern criteria of poetic technique. Furthermore, Hans Kosmala argues that, "we base our scanning entirely on the Masoretic vocalization and accentuation of the texts." Hans Kosmala, "Form and Structure in Ancient Hebrew Poetry (A New Approach)," *VT* 14 (1964): 424. This may not reflect 2nd millennium B.C.E. vocalization, which is another reason why it makes more sense to compare Hebrew poetry to poetry within its own cultural milieu.

21 Willis, "The Genre of Isaiah 5:1–7," 362. J. Skinner, *The Book of the Prophet Isaiah Chapters I–XXXIX* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1896), 32. Victor H. Matthews and Don C. Benjamin, *The Social World of Ancient Israel, 1250–587 B.C.E.* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1993), 47.

22 Gary Royce Williams, "Frustrated Expectations in Isaiah v 1–7: A Literary Interpretation," *VT* 35 (1985): 460. Wildeberger, *Jesaja*, 168.

23 T.K. Cheyne, *The Prophecies of Isaiah, I* (3d ed., revised; New York: Thomas Whittaker, 1884), 29.

24 A. Grafty, "The Literary Genre of Isaiah 5:1–7," *Bib* 60 (1979): 400.

25 Fohrer, *Propheten des Alten Testaments*, 107–108.

26 William C. Graham, "Notes on the Interpretation of Isaiah 5:1–12," *AJS* 45 (1928): 167–168.

27 Willis conjures that Isaiah could have borrowed a few words from a popular song to gain his audience's attention, "The Genre of Isaiah 5:1–7, 360."

were often celebrated in conjunction with the vintage harvest and biblical love poetry associates the vineyard as a metaphor for female sexuality or a place of lovemaking (cf. Song 1:6; 8:12).²⁸

Regardless of the exact setting of the hymn, this song has an uncanny ability to grab the attention of the audience with each twist and turn. The speaker is an enchanted storyteller equipped with descriptive and poignant language intended to stir emotion. The verses are cleverly organized so that the audience is not aware from the beginning that this dirge demands introspection as well as metamorphosis. Olivier argues that, “every reader is challenged to participate in the song that narrates the simple story of a farmer’s frustrated expectations, only to be drawn into deep self-reflection of his own conduct in life.”²⁹ The listeners cannot walk away from hearing this song without recognizing that there is a problem with God’s ‘pleasant planting,’ and this problem does not lie with the divine.

The Song of the Vineyard depicts YHWH’s frustration with the people, the people of Judah in particular. Since the book of Isaiah shows clear evidence of editing by later redactors, it is often difficult to date precisely which oracles belong to the eighth century prophet. The first part of the book of Isaiah (chs. 1–39) is often attributed to Isaiah of Jerusalem since there are many polemics against Assyria and Egypt.³⁰ The concern for societal morality found in first Isaiah is often compared with similar themes in the other eighth century writing prophets (Amos, Hosea, and Micah).³¹ The language of the song can also be dated to the late monarchy because it is composed in Standard Biblical Hebrew (SBH), which shares linguistic similarities to a corpus of Hebrew inscriptions written in the late Iron Age (725–586 B.C.E.).³²

The Song of the Vineyard will be textually analyzed focusing on the complex metaphor that emerges within the song: YHWH IS THE VINTNER OF ISRAEL. Chapter five illuminated the prominence of viticulture in ancient Israel and

28 Longman III, *Song of Songs*, 219.

29 Olivier, “God as Friendly Patron,” 293.

30 For a discussion of the literary unit of Isa 1–39, see Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 114–115.

31 See Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 19; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 108, for some of the similar themes in these compilations.

32 In this song, there is evidence of: *matres lectionis*, the waw-consecutive, the cohortative, the *lamed of* ownership, the particle ׀, the use of ׀ as the 3 ms suffix, and assimilation of the *nun* to the following consonant, to name a few linguistic markers. See, Schniedewind, *A Social History of Hebrew*, 99–125, for a detailed discussion of the categorization of Hebrew in the late monarchy.

the Levant, so the emergence of this metaphor within biblical literature is a reflection of the material culture. The speaker utilizes a visual image to illustrate social dynamics as well as a broken relationship.

2.1 *Textual Analysis of Isaiah 5:1–7*

The Song of the Vineyard is typically broken down structurally into three or four canticles based on strophe and external parallelisms.³³ The successive clauses of either two synonyms or closely associated words create parallelistic lines, which constitute appropriate line breaks. These sections are best organized into four canticles.³⁴ Ancient Near Eastern poetry, Ugaritic poetry in particular, shares many affinities with biblical poetry. James Kugel, who has written extensively on biblical poetry, acknowledges that, “the resemblance of certain repetitive structures in the Bible with Ugaritic repetitions is so close as to indicate beyond reasonable doubt an organic connection.”³⁵ Therefore, I based the layout of Isa 5:1–7 on not only content, but also on the relationship of the strophes within the four canticles. Separating the song into canticles will aid the development of the vineyard metaphor, which is paramount to our study.³⁶

Isaiah 5:1–7

Heading

אשירה נא לידידי	1a	Now let me sing for my beloved,
שירת דודי לכרמו		a song of my beloved regarding his vineyard:

33 A canticle is a unit consisting of one or more strophes. According to Korpel and de Moor, “the strophes in the canticle are held together by external parallelism, sometimes a very clear and repetitious type of parallelism, more often only a few words here and there.” Marjo C.A. Korpel and Johannes C. de Moor, “Fundamentals of Ugaritic and Hebrew Poetry,” in *The Structural Analysis of Biblical and Canaanite Poetry* (JSOTSup 74; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press Ltd., 1988), 41.

34 I found Marjo Korpel’s structural analysis of Isaiah 5:1–7 the most convincing. Korpel, “The Literary Genre of the Song of the Vineyard,” 142–143. Others who have undertaken a structural analysis: O. Loretz, “Weinberglied und Prophetische Deutung im Protest-Song Jes. 5,1–7,” *UF* 7 (1975): 573–576. Also, Wildeberger, *Jesaja*, 1689 ff.

35 Kugel, *Idea of Biblical Poetry*, 37.

36 The LXX does not rearrange, add, or delete any words from the song, but the voice is changed to first person in most instances. The LXX translation maintains a first person speech throughout except in vs. 1b: “my beloved had a vineyard.” The speech in the MT moves back and forth between first and third person.

Canticle I.

- | | | |
|------------------|----|--|
| כרם היה לידידי | 1b | My beloved had a vineyard |
| בקרן בן־שמן | | on a very fertile hill. |
| ויעזקהו ויסקלהו | 2a | He dug around it and cleared it of stones, |
| ויטעהו שרק | | and planted it (with) choice vines; |
| ויבן מגדל בתוכו | 2b | He built a watchtower in the midst of it, |
| וגם־ייקב חצב בו | | and he even hewed a winepress in it; |
| ויקו לעשות ענבים | | He waited for it to yield grapes, |
| ויעש באשים: | | but it produced wild (rotten) grapes. |

Canticle II.

- | | | |
|------------------------|---|--|
| ועתה יושב ירושלם | 3 | And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem |
| ואיש יהודה | | and people of Judah: |
| שפטו־נא ביני | | Judge, now, between me |
| ובין כרמי: | | and my vineyard. |
| מה־לעשות עוד לכרמי | 4 | What more was there to do for my |
| ולא עשיתי בו | | vineyard that I have not done in it? |
| מדוע קויתי לעשות ענבים | | Why did I wait for it to yield grapes, |
| ויעש באשים: | | and it produced wild (rotten) grapes? |

Canticle III.

- | | | |
|----------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| ועתה אודיעה־נא אתכם | 5 | And now, let me make known to you |
| את אשר־אני עשה לכרמי | | what I will do to my vineyard: |
| הסר משוכתו | | Its hedge removed, |
| והיה לבער | | and it shall be broken through; |
| פרץ גדרו | | Its walls broken, |
| והיה למרמס: | | and it shall be trampled down. |
| ואשיתוהו בתה | 6 | I will make it a waste, |
| לא יזמר | | it shall not be pruned, |
| ולא יעדד | | it shall not be hoed, and it shall be |
| ועלה שמיר ושיח | | overgrown with briars and thorns; |
| ועל העבים אצוה | | I will also command the clouds |
| מהמטיר עליו מטר: | | not to rain upon it. |

Canticle IV.

- | | | |
|-------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| כי כרם יהוה צבאות | 7a | For the vineyard of YHWH of Hosts |
| בית ישראל | | is the house of Israel, |
| ואיש יהודה | | and the people of Judah |
| נטע שעשועיו | | are his pleasant planting. |

ויקו למשפט	7b	He waited for justice,
והנה משפח		and, behold, bloodshed!
לצדקה והנה צעקה:		For righteousness, and behold, a cry! ³⁷

2.1.1 The Heading: Isaiah 5:1a

The heading of the Song of the Vineyard (vs. 1a) gives the impression that this text is going to be a love song since the singer states that the song is for “my beloved.” The prophet assumes the character of a popular musician to illicit the attention of the audience.³⁸ The grape-picking season and the vintage festival occurred in the fall months and were often accompanied by wedding celebrations. Men and women were both present on these occasions and the mood was light. Singing, dancing, and drinking were all part of the festivities (Isa 62:9; Joel 2:24–26; Isa 16:10). The singer of this song may have been the bridegroom, a friend of the bridegroom, or even the bride herself.³⁹

Women are specified as the singers of several songs preserved in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Song of Miriam-Exod 15:21, Song of Deborah-Judg 5, some of the Song of Songs), and women are often the musicians on these occasions too. Song 8:11 is noteworthy because the woman sings a song about Solomon that begins in a similar manner to the first canticle of the Song of the Vineyard: כרם היה לשלמה (Solomon had a vineyard ...). In Isaiah 5:1b, the body of the song begins: כרם היה לידיד (my beloved had a vineyard ...). The heading of this song may have captured the first few lines of a popular wedding song or betrothal, the vineyard symbolizing the bride.⁴⁰

Women are depicted as vineyards and fields in Sumerian, Egyptian, Ugaritic, and biblical texts.⁴¹ For example, a marriage text from Ugarit (KTU 1.24) describes the betrothal of the West Semitic moon god Yarikh with the Mesopotamian moon goddess Nikkal-Ib.⁴² The poetry is erotic and descriptive from

37 Translation is mine.

38 Paul Haupt, “Isaiah’s Parable of the Vineyard,” *AJS* 19 (1903): 193.

39 Williams, “Frustrated Expectations in Isaiah v 1–7,” 459–460.

40 It is interesting to note that just as the divine is often portrayed metaphorically using images from nature, so too love poetry describes the male and female lovers in similar terms. The Song of Songs is saturated with images from nature to describe either love or actual male/female anatomy. Nature was a source for descriptive language because the people were dependent upon and deeply connected to the natural world.

41 Cf. Samuel Noah Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite: Aspects of Faith, Myth, and Ritual in Ancient Sumer* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969), 81, 100. Siegfried Schott, *Altägyptische Liebeslieder: Mit Märchen und Liebesgeschichten* (Zürich: Artemis-Verlag, 1950), 50, 56, 82, and 107.

42 The goddess’s name either means “great lady,” “the fruit,” or “the radiant one.” See Simon

both the male and female lovers, yet it is the female who is envisioned as a vineyard: “I will make her field like a vineyard, the field of her love like a flower-garden/orchard” (KTU 1.24:23–24).⁴³ Similarly, the opening and closing songs of the Song of Songs are framed by references to the Shulammite woman as a vineyard. In Song 1:6, the woman admits that even though she is the vintner of her family’s vineyard, her own vineyard she has not kept. She allowed the sun to darken her complexion instead of veiling herself as was customary at the time. When women were described as “fields” or “vineyards,” there was an idea that they needed to be cultivated and carefully maintained.⁴⁴

In the last song of the book, however, the woman claims her vineyard for herself, “my vineyard, my very own, is for myself” (Song 8:12). This woman is no longer embarrassed by “her vineyard.” Instead, she is portrayed confident and assured, completely in control of her property. She utters this line right after describing Solomon’s vineyard that was entrusted to several keepers. The Shulammite woman maintains that she does not need anyone to “keep” her vineyard because her vineyard belongs only to her. The love poetry in these songs creates a “mood of shared love” where the man and woman are equal players, transcending social class.⁴⁵ These same egalitarian images are found in Ugaritic love poetry as well, KTU 1.24 often utilized as a primary example.⁴⁶ The image of the woman as a vineyard was a theme in love poetry, which is why the first line of the Song of the Vineyard may have initially evoked sensual images.

The opening lines of the Song of the Vineyard conjure images of love, a possible love song akin to the love poems in Song of Songs. The catchy tune sparked the curiosity of the people listening and they became eager participants, wondering what the singer would say about the beloved. The first canticle of the song then beautifully articulates the beloved’s devotion and concern for his vineyard.

2.1.2 Canticle I: Isaiah 5:1b–2

Canticle I details the painstaking labor that the vintner invested in his vineyard. This farmer found a pristine location (probably on a terraced hill), cleared

B. Parker, ed., *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry* (SBLWAW; Athens, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 1987), 215.

43 Translation is mine.

44 See also, Pss 128:3a: “Your wife is like a fruitful vine inside your house.”

45 Carol Meyers, “Gender Imagery in the Song of Songs,” in *A Feminist’s Companion to the Song of Songs* (ed. A. Brenner; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press Ltd., 2001), 211.

46 See also, KTU 1.10, 1.11, and 1.23, for examples of other Ugaritic love songs.

the soil of the larger boulders, built a watchtower with the removed boulders, planted it with prized vines, and hewed a winepress out of stone. Chapter four chronicled the various steps involved in preparing and maintaining a vineyard in Iron Age Israel, and these few lines accurately depict this process. The watchtower would have been found at more lucrative vineyards, but its mention in the text testifies to the attention the vintner took to protect and fortify the vineyard.⁴⁷

The first verse of Canticle I advances the image conjured in the opening strophes, still reminiscent of a love poem: "my beloved had a vineyard" (possibly referring to the woman lover). The phrase בִּקְרֵן בֶּן־שֶׁמֶן is typically translated as "on a very fertile hill." However, in most biblical and Ugaritic texts, קֶרֶן means horn. This is the only instance where this word is translated 'hill' rather than horn. Horn may have been chosen rather than hill to prolong the illusion of a love poem. We know from Ugaritic poetry that horn and oil were often paired together. For example, Baal anointed the horn of Annat's headdress with oil in KTU 1.10.II 21–23. The use of 'horn' and 'oil' in Isaiah 5 may still have evoked images of a woman as a vineyard, since, according to Korpel, "perfumed oil played an important role in the ancient Near Eastern love poetry (cf. Song 1:3; 4:10)."⁴⁸ The Hebrew term depicting terraced lands is not known, so קֶרֶן may have also been the term used for the fertile land appropriated for vineyards.⁴⁹

The labor-intensive job involving stone removal and ground clearing described in verse two are not typical images associated with love poetry. The technical terms for 'digging up the land' (עֲזֹק) and 'clearing the land of stones' (סִקֵּל), as well as building a 'tower' (מִגְדֵּל) and 'hewing the winepress' (חֶצֶב) would have evoked the mechanisms of wine production rather than love poetry.⁵⁰ Furthermore, the term שֶׁרֶק could be translated several ways: choice vines, a vine variety that produces red grapes (*Vitis vinifera*), or vines from the valley of Sorek.⁵¹ This term is somehow connected specifically to viticulture and

47 Borowski, *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel*, 106.

48 Korpel, "The Literary Genre of the Song of the Vineyard," 125.

49 Gen 27:28 and Num 13:20 use the term שֶׁמֶן (oil, fat, rich), to designate land that is ready for viticulture.

50 Since this text is highly metaphorical, the tower may have represented Zion and the wine vat may have referred to the lowest point in the city. See Korpel, "Literary Genre of Song of Vineyard, 128."

51 Hundreds of oil presses have been found at Ekron (Tel Miqne) and Timnah (Tel Batash) in the Valley of Sorek. See G.L. Kelm and Amihai Mazar, "Three Seasons of Excavations at Tel Batash-Biblical Timnah," *BASOR* 248 (1982): 34–35. Walsh also argues that this valley had the necessary components for viticulture.

therefore could not be considered language akin to love poetry. This is language more specific to vine grower trade secrets and the vintage harvest rather than love poetry. Even though the scene has changed, the speaker remains the same and the song continues to highlight the diligence of the vintner. This vintner is well experienced in vine care and he expects his vineyard to yield a luscious vintage.

Isaiah 5:2b abruptly alters the tone of the song from love and anticipation, to shock and disappointment. Since viticulture was one of the staple crops of the agricultural cycle in ancient Israel, most people would have had some knowledge about the steps involved in the vintage process. Victor Matthews, drawing upon this scene in Isaiah 5, argues that, “the audience is both familiar with the various aspects of viticulture and capable of making the connection alluded by the speaker.”⁵² The vintner took every precaution to create an ideal habitat for his grapes, yet his harvest burgeoned into odious and worthless wild grapes (בִּאֲשִׁים).⁵³ The listeners would have sympathized with the protagonist’s confusion and disillusionment, since he invested possibly five or six years of his life into a futile pursuit.

The vintner expected the grapes to be sweet and luscious because he had dutifully followed all the necessary steps to ensure the harvest was a success. This is the point in the song that speaks to the brilliance of the author because he/she has moved the audience through various stages of emotion and disappointment was not the expected outcome of such a lovely dirge. It is at this moment that the metaphor of the vineyard moves beyond erotic underlays and vintage landscapes, and the audience is invited to become an active participant, a judge, of the disappointed vintner.

2.1.3 Canticle 11: Isaiah 5:3–4

Canticle 11 calls on the audience to form an opinion about the vintner in question, who is now identified in first person as the speaker. The disappointed vintner has captured the audience’s sympathy and now he conjures them to reflect on where he went wrong. He waited (vs. 2b, 4b, 7b) patiently for the fruit of his labor, but the result was the opposite of what he had expected. Injustice and frustrated expectations often lead to various interpretations and so it is not surprising that the speaker expects a response to his questions. John S. Kloppenborg eloquently depicts the thrust of this predicament; “a realism

⁵² Matthews, “Treading the Winepress,” 23.

⁵³ בִּאֲשִׁים is a *hapax legomenon*. It is typically translated ‘wild grapes’ or ‘stinking/bad smelling’ from the root בִּאֲשִׁים.

that provokes the hearers to render a judgment in the case decided, unaware that in doing so, they condemn themselves."⁵⁴ Since the Jerusalemite listeners may still be unaware that they are the ones being judged, it would have been easier to render a judgment against the vintner.

2Samuel 12 is another text that envisions a hypothetical story of injustice. After King David had Bathsheba's husband killed in war, the prophet Nathan told the king a story about the injustices of a poor man at the expense of a rich man. King David's anger was "greatly kindled" against the man who killed the beloved sheep of the poor man. He was quick to pass judgment on the rich traveler, not knowing that he was in reality, passing judgment on himself. The devastated poor man in 2Samuel 12 and the disappointed vintner in Isaiah 5 are stories that ignite the social passions in each one of us.⁵⁵ The repetition of endings in verses 4 and 5 reiterate the misfortune of the patient vintner. The main purpose of installing a vineyard was to benefit from the wine that it produced. Carey Walsh argues that, "to cultivate a vineyard, tread its grapes, and not to drink the wine, became a repeated biblical symbol of misfortune (Deut 28:39; Job 24:11; Amos 5:11; Mic 6:15; Zeph 1:13)."⁵⁶ The misfortune of the patient vintner elicited a reaction from the listeners until they realized that they were the stinking fruit.

2.1.4 Canticle III: Isaiah 5:5–6

Isaiah 5:5–6 could be considered a rant and rave rather than a ballad. It is hard to imagine this section of the song accompanied by a timbrel. In direct contrast to verses 1b and 2, these verses describe in minute detail the dismantling and utter destruction of the carefully tended vineyard. Instead of a tower and walls for protection, it is left open to the elements. Instead of delicately pruned vines, there are briars and thorns.⁵⁷ The fertile hill became a wasteland, arid and void of the water necessary for growth. The vineyard is not only left unattended, it is intentionally razed to the ground. Just as the vintner labored to create the vineyard, the dismantling required physical effort as well.

The speaker's assertion that he had the power to command the clouds not to rain on the vineyard would have directed the audience to the true identity of the vintner, if the previous verse had not already blown his cover. The powerful storm-god, one who had the power to bless or curse the land, chooses

54 Kloppenborg, "Egyptian Viticultural Practices," 137.

55 Naboth's vineyard could also be classified in this category.

56 Walsh, *Fruit of the Vine*, 209.

57 The loss of the hedge and fence may represent the Assyrian invasion, which becomes a theme in chapters 6–12. See Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 208.

to curse the vineyard here. This imagery echoes the blessings and curses found in Deuteronomy 11: “the anger of YHWH will be kindled against you and he will shut up the heavens, so that there will be no rain and the land will yield no fruit; then you will perish off the good land that YHWH is giving you” (Deut 11:16). YHWH promises rain for the vine (Deut 11:14) if they followed the covenant, but he vowed that there would be no rain or fruit if the covenant was disregarded (cf. Deut 28:25; Lev 26:19–20). The Song of the Vineyard visualizes these curse-formulae. The planting of the divine is expected to yield ‘choice fruit’ or the rain will stop and the land will become an inhabited wasteland.

Canticle 111 captures the rage that is often evoked by severe disappointment. The vineyard is not left to its own demise to slowly wither and fade over time. Instead, the land is ravaged by its creator. The divine anger is not something that is depicted lightly in the Hebrew Bible. Instead, angry YHWH is a vengeful god, intent on punishment. Robert Carroll noticed that YHWH’s anger is often related to food and drink in the prophetic literature, the grape-treader illustrating one of these motifs. In Isaiah 63, YHWH is depicted as a grape-treader/warrior, covered in the blood of the people: “I have trodden the wine press alone, and from the peoples no one was with me; I trod them in my anger and trampled them in my wrath; their juice spattered on my garments, and stained all my robes” (Isa 63:3).⁵⁸ According to Carroll, “the berserker god is a mad chef intent on violence and destruction, wreaking havoc on all people and against their lands. It is a most horrific representation of a terrifying figure, reflecting much of the mythology of the gods in the ancient Near East.”⁵⁹ YHWH is not necessarily depicted as a grape-treader in Isaiah 5, but the imagery confirms that the pleasant planting will taste the cup of his wrath (Isa 51:17; Jer 25:17–29; 51:1–7). In this text, God’s wrath takes the form of drought and desiccation.

In ancient Israel, there was a fine line between security and abundance and famine and devastation. The forces of chaos were never completely at bay in a world dependent upon not only the agricultural calendar, but the threat of enemy attack as well. The once luscious vineyard, carefully constructed and organized, quickly became a desolate and barren environment, devoid of a future harvest. The overgrown briars and thorns became a symbol of the forthcoming destruction of the land and its people.

58 Also, see Lam 1:15. These texts illustrate exilic imagery, but they stem from the vineyard desolation motif articulated in Isa 5:1–7.

59 Carroll, “YHWH’s Sour Grapes,” 114.

2.1.5 Canticle IV: Isaiah 5:7

The Song of the Vineyard portrays a vine grower generally shocked and frustrated by the worthless fruit that was harvested. He did everything in his power to ensure that his vineyard would be successful. He was destined to grow sweet grapes because he planted a "choice vine" from the "purest stock" (Jer 2:21). Sour and poisonous grapes are harvested from the "vinestock of Sodom and the vineyards of Gomorrah" (Deut 32:32), not from the plantings of YHWH. Yet, by verse seven, the speaker reveals that *בית ישראל* (the house of Israel) and *אֵשׁ יְהוּדָה* (the people of Judah) are the choice vines that were planted in verse one. Interestingly, both Israel and Judah are identified with the vineyard. If the listeners were in fact Jerusalemites, then this would have come as a shock to them because they saw themselves as far superior morally to northern Israel. Northern Israel succeeded from the monarchy and stopped worshipping at the temple, but the Judahites were the faithful followers of YHWH, the pleasant planting. The harvest of justice and righteousness did not emerge from the house of Israel or the people of Judah.

According to the final verse of the song, instead of justice (*משפט*) the Lord of Hosts found bloodshed (*משפח*), instead of righteousness (*צדקה*) he heard a war cry (*צעקה*). The choice of these two sets of word pairs was intentional. Justice and bloodshed differ from one another in pre-Masoretic orthography by only one letter, the same for righteousness and a cry.⁶⁰ This is Hebrew poetics at its finest, complete with similar sounding antonyms and word play. Justice and righteousness are terms that form a common word-pair in the Hebrew Bible, especially in the book of Isaiah (cf. 1:21, 27; 5:7, 16; 16:5; 26:9; 28:17; 32:1; 16; 56:1; 58:2; 59:9, 14). I support R.W.L. Moberly's theory that the location of this word pair at the climax of the song is a precursor for chapter five as a whole.⁶¹ The stress is placed on the moral concerns of the society rather than cultic obligations. Israel and Judah are the stinking grapes of injustice and unrighteousness. Joseph Blenkinsopp argues that when these two terms are used in tandem, "the basic connotation is of a society in which the rights of all, including the most marginalized-the destitute, orphans, and widows (1:17, 21-23; 11:4-5) are respected."⁶² The fruit of the vines should be justice and righteousness, not bloodshed and a war cry. The Song of the Vineyard symbolizes the level of corruption in the land, a corruption so vile that the land literally "stinks" of its filth.

60 Phonetically these words were different, but orthographically they differed by only one letter.

61 Moberly, "Whose Justice? Which Righteousness?" 59.

62 Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 108.

2.2 *Reasons for the Destruction of the Vineyard*

YHWH enters into judgment with the elders and princes of the his people:

It is you who have devoured the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses.

Isa 3:14

Isaiah 3:14 as well as the woe oracles of Isa 5:8–17, paint a vivid picture of the socio-economic situation that angered the divine vintner in the Song of the Vineyard. The lavish lifestyle of the elite is highlighted, who pursued wine both day and night (5:11) without regard for the commandments. They sequestered the estates of rural farmers in order to control the economic means of production, amassing great wealth (5:8).⁶³ This led to an uneven distribution of wealth and became a source of criticism for the eighth century prophets (cf. Amos 5:11; Isa 10:1–4; Mic 2:2).⁶⁴ Isaiah of Jerusalem, Amos, Hosea, and Micah are particularly concerned with the social implications of these economic disparities. The first chapter of Isaiah highlights that unless the people become once again a “city of righteousness” and are “redeemed by justice,” YHWH’s anger will not subside (Isa 1:26–27).

The archaeological evidence also confirms that the eighth century B.C.E. was a turning point in agricultural production, both for northern Israel and Judah. For example, the discovery of the Samaria Ostraca jars as well as large storage complexes throughout the country demonstrate that there was a centralized distribution of agricultural products, wine in particular, by the time of King Hezekiah (ca. 715–687 B.C.E.). The agricultural shift from subsistence based farming to cash cropping was also enhanced by advances in production such as terracing (see chapter 6, heading 2.1.5). Samaria flourished under this emerging system until the campaigns of Sennacherib destroyed the city in 701 B.C.E. This caused large groups of refugees to move south toward Jerusalem and the Judean highlands.⁶⁵ The city of Jerusalem was able to accommodate the immigration of many fleeing the Assyrian army largely in part because of

63 Marvin L. Chaney, “Systemic Study of the Israelite Monarchy,” *Semeia* 37 (1986): 53–76. Jeremy D. Smoak, “Building Houses and Planting Vineyards: The Early Inner-Biblical Discourse on an Ancient Israelite Wartime Curse,” *JBL* 127 (2008): 25–26.

64 Marvin L. Chaney, “The Dynamics of Political Economy Critiqued by the Eighth-Century Prophets,” in *Reformed Faith and Economics* (ed. R.L. Stivers; Lanham: University Press of America, 1989), 15–30.

65 For a discussion of the archaeological evidence for Jerusalem’s expansion in the late eighth

innovations in agricultural production. According to Olivier, "along with new water conservation techniques, e.g. the construction of rock-cut cisterns, the gradual implementation of iron tools and the so-called dry farming method, it resulted in the dramatic increase of 600 % in the population, as is evident from the large number of new villages (five acres or less) that were established in this area at that time."⁶⁶

One of the main reasons for the growth of the agricultural industry in the eighth century was wine production.⁶⁷ As Israelite and Judean societies became increasingly urbanized, wine became a lucrative trading item. Egypt and Mesopotamia did not have the climate or soil quality necessary for a thriving viticulture operation. Therefore, wealthy landowners began the process of latifundialization, depriving the local peasants of most of their harvest as well as requiring them to pay heavy taxes.⁶⁸ This placed an enormous burden on the rural population, which prompted many of the social speeches of the eighth and seventh century prophets.

The social grievances caused by the wealthy coupled with their desire for a greater economic output of resources, led to their chastisement in prophetic literature, Isaiah 5 in particular. According to the text, "their root will become rotten, and their blossoms go up like dust" (Isa 5:24). What was planted will be burned and rejected because YHWH "stretched out his hand against them" (Isa 5:25). The Assyrian campaigns against the North caused a devastating blow to the economy and most of the terraced land was destroyed.⁶⁹ However,

century see, Magen D. Broshi, "Expansion of Jerusalem in the Reigns of Hezekiah and Manasseh," *IEJ* 24 (1974): 21–26.

66 Olivier, "God as Friendly Patron," 295.

67 Jeremy D. Smoak, "Building Houses and Planting Vineyards: The Inner-Biblical Discourse of an Ancient Israelite Wartime Curse," (Ph.D. diss., UCLA, 2007), 122. Gershon Edelstein and I. Milevski, "The Rural Settlement of Jerusalem Re-Evaluated: Surveys and Excavations in the Reph'aim Valley and Mevasseret Jerusalem," *PEQ* 126 (1994): 2–23. Gershon Edelstein, I. Milevski, and S. Aurant, *The Rephaim Valley Project: Villages, Terraces, and Stone Mounds. Excavations in Manahat, Jerusalem 1987–1989* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1998). Broshi, "Wine in Ancient Palestine-Introductory Notes," 21–40.

68 For more information on the social stratification of the late Judean monarch, see Alexander H. Joffe, "The Rise of Secondary States in the Iron Age Levant," *JESHO* 45 (2003): 425–467.

69 The Assyrians intentionally destroyed most of the vines in northern Israel during their campaigns. They then rebuilt the wine industry in the early seventh century so they could use the commodity as a source of revenue as well. See Jeremy D. Smoak, "Building Houses and Planting Vineyards," *JBL* 127 (2008): 20–24. Also, S.W. Cole, "The Destruction of Orchards in Assyrian Warfare," in *Assyrian 1995. Proceedings of the 10th Anniversary*

Jerusalem benefited from the influx of people displaced by the Assyrian sieges and much of the land surrounding the city, including Hebron, was used for wine production. This led to a similar social stratification that was witnessed in Samaria a few decades before, “joining house to house, field to field” (Isa 5: 7). The prophets were concerned about the marginal and underrepresented members of society, so many of their attacks were against the elite few who had the power and economic means to alter these injustices; injustices that were considered the core of YHWH’s wrath.

2.3 Conclusion to Isaiah 5

The disappointed vintner was a persona that deeply resonated with an eighth century Jerusalem audience. Viticulture was a profitable export for the wealthy and a menial, but sustainable job for the peasants. Even if the landowners were not involved in the daily maintenance of a vineyard, as shrewd businessmen they would have known the ins and outs of wine production. To labor for years and not be able to enjoy the fruit of the harvest was considered a tragedy in biblical literature. The prophet Isaiah masterfully crafted a melody that struck a cord with the audience. In this way, the complex metaphor YHWH IS THE VINTNER OF ISRAEL became a recurrent image within prophetic literature. This metaphor emerged from the primary metaphor YHWH IS THE PLANTER OF THE PEOPLE, commonly attributed to the Song of the Sea (Exod 15:17), but developed more specifically during the eighth century B.C.E.⁷⁰

The Song of the Sea echoes the memory of the birth of a nation depicted as a choice planting, complete with joyous singing and unbridled confidence. The Song of the Vineyard, however, captures the disillusionment of a deity, embittered by a splintered nation. The choice planting did not produce the expected results envisioned by a victorious storm-god in Exodus 15. These two songs follow a similar metrical pattern, yet their messages are quite different.⁷¹ Exodus 15 portrays the people as plants, which was a common metaphor for people in the ancient Near East. Isaiah 5 draws on this image of the people as plants, yet the Israelite people are depicted more specifically as vines rather than the broader category of “plants.” However, the vine imagery is not a

Symposium of the Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project. Helsinki. September 7–11 (ed. S. Parpola and R.M. Whiting; Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1997), 29–40.

70 See Conrad E. L’Heureux, “The Redactional History of Isaiah 5.1–10.4,” in *In the Shelter of Elyon: Essays on Ancient Palestinian Life and Literature in Honor of G.W. Ahlström* (ed. W. Boyd Barrick and J.R. Spencer; JSOTSup 31; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 103.

71 For a discussion of the similar meter between the two songs, see Haupt, “Isaiah’s Parable of the Vineyard,” 150.

positive symbol and conjures images of exploitation and greed rather than tranquility and abundance. In this way, the inhabitants of Israel and Judah became associated with worthless vines, a powerful tribute to the metaphorical creativity of the authors.

3 Vine Imagery in Amos, Hosea, and Micah

The eighth century prophets, keenly aware of the societal importance of the grapevine as an economic stimulus, began to correlate the people with the vine itself. Unfortunately, this was not usually an affirmative description of the people, but rather a polemic against the social injustices caused by the ruling class. Almost every reference to viticulture, whether metaphorically or literally, carries a negative rather than a positive tone.

3.1 *Amos*

This is what YHWH showed me—a basket of summer fruit. He said, 'Amos, what do you see?' And I said, 'A basket of summer fruit.' Then YHWH said to me, 'the end has come upon my people Israel; I will never again pass by them'.

Amos 8:1–2

The prophet Amos lived during the reigns of Jeroboam II (786–746 B.C.E.) and Uzziah (783–742 B.C.E.).⁷² The book of Amos describes the prophet as an agricultural man, although he may have been more influential than the text portrays. He is described as a shepherd (1:1), a herdsman (7:14), and a sycamore fig gatherer (7:14).⁷³ Given his uncanny rhetorical competence and his awareness of the political and social issues of Israel and Judah, Amos may

⁷² David N. Freedman and Shalom Paul both argue that the majority of writings from the book of Amos are from the eighth century prophet. William R. Harper, however, argues that Amos 9:11 is a late edition to the book. David N. Freedman, *Amos: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary* (AB 24A; New York: Doubleday, 1989). William R. Harper, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Amos and Hosea* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1904), 195–196. I would argue that Amos is pre-exilic because of the numerous references to viticulture in the text. Viticulture is rarely depicted in post-exilic literature because so much of the material culture was destroyed in the seventh century Babylonian campaigns.

⁷³ Shepherd (בוקר) and sycamore gatherer (בולס שקמים) are both *hapax legomena*.

have been a wealthy landowner himself.⁷⁴ Amos was especially concerned with the poor and their plight. The rich were exploiting the laborers to the point that they had to sell themselves off into slavery to pay their debts (2:6; 8:6), while they lived in houses of hewn-stone and drank bowls of wine (5:11).

The oracles of Amos attribute the social disparities to a lack of justice and righteousness. In Amos 5, the prophet calls out, “let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an overflowing stream” (Amos 5:24). Justice and righteousness as a word pair was also as theme of the prophet Isaiah (see chapter 6, heading 2.1.5).⁷⁵ The moral implications of taking advantage of the poor are highlighted as the chief complaint in these writings and Amos vividly predicts impending doom on the northern kingdom (3:12, 15; 5:2, 17; 7:9, 11; 9:8). Interestingly, references to viticulture resonate throughout the oracles.

Wine imagery is associated with the moral depravity of the people in the book of Amos (see Table 3). In the first eight chapters of the book, there are eight references to viticulture and they are all connected either to the moral sins and greed of the wealthy or predictions of impending disaster. The predictions of doom (5:11, 17; 8:1, 10) depict angry YHWH intent on causing pain and destruction to a wayward people. The vintage feast is described as a place of mourning instead of celebration; wine will not be produced in vineyards any longer. All of this will happen because YHWH is going to pass through the vineyard, never to return. The other references describe the blatant greed and lavish lifestyle that the wealthy had become accustomed to in Israel and Judah. Altogether, the representation of viticulture in Amos is bleak, considering this was a time of incredible economic prosperity due in a large part to wine production.

Amos 9:13–15 is the only section of the book that shows viticulture in a favorable light and it is describing a futuristic era of restoration:

The time is surely coming, says YHWH, when the one who plows shall overtake the one who reaps, and the treader of grapes the one who sows the seed; the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it. I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit. I will plant them upon their land, and they shall never again be plucked up out of the land that I have given them, says YHWH your God.

74 L’Heureux, “The Redactional History of Isaiah 5,” 99–119.

75 This word pairing possibly originated with the oracles of Amos, since his ministry is considered several decades earlier than Isaiah of Jerusalem.

TABLE 3 *Vine imagery in Amos 1–8*

2:12	But you made the Nazirites drink wine.
4:1	Hear this word, you cows of Bashan who are on Mount Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to their husbands, 'Bring something to drink'!
4:9b	I laid waste your gardens and your vineyards; the locust devoured your fig trees and your olive trees; yet you did not return to me, says YHWH.
5:11	Therefore because you trample on the poor and take from them levies of grain, you have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not live in them; you have planted vineyards, but you shall not drink their wine.
5:17	In all the vineyards there shall be wailing, for I will pass through the midst of you, says YHWH.
6:6	Alas for those who lie on beds of ivory, and lounge on their couches, and eat lamb from the flock, and calves from the stall; who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp, and like David improvise on instruments of music; who drink wine from bowls, and anoint themselves with the finest oils, but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph!
8:1	This is what YHWH showed me—a basket of summer fruit. He said, 'Amos, what do you see?' And I said, 'a basket of summer fruit.' Then YHWH said to me, 'the end has come upon my people Israel; I will never again pass by them.'
8:10	I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; I will bring sackcloth on all loins, and baldness on every head; I will make it like the mourning for an only son, and the end of it like a bitter day.

Many scholars assume that these verses are a later redaction of the book following the Babylonian destruction in 586 B.C.E., but these verses could have also been added during the Hezekian period when Amos may have reached its final form.⁷⁶ Verse fifteen draws on imagery reminiscent of 2 Sam 7:10, but could also be related to post-exilic references to "plucking" and "planting" (see chapter 7, heading 3).

Images of viticulture are sprinkled throughout these oracles, yet not often in a favorable light. The association of the people with the vine(yard) is not visibly apparent in the book, but the summer fruit analogy (8:1) could be a

76 Schniedewind, *Society and Promise to David*, 64. Schniedewind summarizes the arguments regarding the dating of these verses. Also see Smoak, "Building Houses and Planting Vineyards," 26–29.

reference to worthless grapes. In chapter nine, the people are referred to as a futuristic planting (9:15) of YHWH, one that will never be plucked up again. This vision includes a promise of restoration, where the hills will flow with wine in abundance and the people will once again be able to drink the wine from their vineyards. Thus, the planting that is referenced could be a reference to the people as vines more specifically. The complex metaphor YHWH IS THE VINTNER OF THE PEOPLE is not clearly laid out in these oracles, but viticulture is highlighted as a prominent theme in the litigations against the wealthy residents. It is the prophet Hosea who develops this association more definitively.

3.2 *Hosea*

Israel is a luxuriant vine that yields its fruit.

Hos 10:1a

The writings of the prophet Hosea (ca. 752–721 B.C.E.) focus on northern Israel before the fall of Samaria in 721 B.C.E. Unlike the prophet Amos, who was mainly concerned with inequality and social justice, the writings of Hosea are also preoccupied with the covenant and Israel's faithfulness to YHWH. The people had turned to Canaanite gods and were erecting altars to these gods, as well as participating in sexual orgies connected to these fertility cults (2:5b–14; 9:10). The majority of passages associated with viticulture in the book of Hosea mirror the image of the people as harlots, whoring themselves to other gods instead of remaining faithful to YHWH (see Table 4).

These passages depict the people as so off track from the covenant commandments that they did not even know that it was YHWH who supplied them with the grain, wine, and oil that they were using to worship Baal. Therefore, it is not surprising that Hosea references the Exodus event throughout his writings, in an attempt to stimulate their memories of who planted them in the land (2:15; 11:1; 12:9, 13; 13:4).

Sexual orgies, slashing themselves before foreign gods, and building altars, are all intertwined with viticulture imagery in these writings. In Hosea 10:1, the luxuriant vine is depicted as a metaphor for Israel. Hosea may be drawing on this image from the oracles of his contemporary Isaiah of Jerusalem, or this metaphor may have originated in this context. Either way, the vine has become corrupted and so angry YHWH pledges to take away the wine, the vintage singing, the festivals, and the vineyards themselves.

Just as Amos 9:11–15 imagines a forthcoming era when the people's fortune will be restored, Hos 14:4–7 too features an idyllic homecoming. The vivid

TABLE 4 *Vine imagery in Hosea*

2:5-6	For their mother has played the whore; she who conceived them has acted shamefully. For she said, 'I will go after my lovers; they give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.' Therefore I will hedge up her way with thorns; and I will build a wall against her, so that she cannot find her paths.
2:15	From there I will give her vineyards, and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. There she shall respond as in the days of her youth, as at the time when came out of the land of Egypt.
2:8-9	She did not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the wine, and the oil, and who lavished upon her silver and gold that they used for Baal. Therefore, I will take back my grain in its time, and my wine in its season; and I will take away my wool and my flax, which were to cover her nakedness.
2:11-12a	I will put an end to all her mirth, her festivals, her new moons, her Sabbaths, and all her appointed festivals. I will lay waste her vines and her fig trees.
4:11	Wine and new wine take away the understanding.
4:18	When their drinking is ended, they indulge in sexual orgies; they love lewdness more than glory.
7:5	On the day of our king the officials became sick with the heat of wine.
7:14	They do not cry to me from the heart, but they wail upon their beds; they gash themselves for grain and wine.
9:2-3a	Threshing floor and wine vat shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail them. They shall not remain in the land of YHWH.
9:4a	They shall not pour drink offerings of wine to YHWH, and their sacrifices shall not please him.
9:10a	Like grapes in the wilderness, I found Israel.
9:16a	Ephraim is stricken, their root is dried up, they shall bear no fruit.
10:1-2	Israel is luxuriant vine that yields its fruit. The more his fruit increased the more altars he built; as his country improved, he improved his pillars. Their heart is false; now they must bear their guilt. YHWH will break down their altars, and destroy their pillars.
14:4-7	I will heal their disloyalty; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them. I will be like the dew to Israel; he shall blossom like the lily, he shall strike root like the forests of Lebanon. His shoots shall spread out; his beauty shall be like the olive tree, and his fragrance like that of Lebanon. They shall again live beneath my shadow, they shall flourish as a garden; they shall blossom like the vine, their fragrance shall be like the wine of Lebanon.

agricultural imagery envisions the people as a lily, a forest with deep roots, an olive tree, a garden, and a vine. YHWH is depicted as the dew, a crucial component to vine survival during the hot summer months. The divine anger has subsided at this point and he once again promises to not only protect his planting, but also to be a constant presence.

3.3 *Micah*

You shall tread grapes, but not drink wine.

Mic 6:15b

The writings of the prophet Micah (ca. 725–687 B.C.E.) echo the predilections of the destruction of the vineyard depicted in Isaiah, Amos, and Hosea. The people are never specifically attributed to vines in Micah's oracles. Instead, the best of the people is likened to a brier and thorn hedge, unfit for producing any desirable fruit (see Table 5). This imagery is reminiscent of the Jotham Fable (Judg 9:7–20), where Abimelech's leadership is compared to a bramble/desert thorn, bound to cause more harm than good (see chapter 6, heading 1.2). Vineyards that do not yield the desired outcome continue to resonate in the oracles of Micah, a tragedy for the grape treader.

Micah 7:1–4 is a noteworthy passage because it draws heavily on the imagery of the disappointed vintner in the Song of the Vineyard. According to the lament in Micah 7, there are no grapes to eat after the harvest (Isa 5:2b), everyone lies in wait for blood (Isa 5:7), the people pervert justice (Isa 5:7), and the people are associated with briars and thorns (Isa 5:6a). Since Isa 5:1–7 may have been a well-known song in the eighth-century, the allusion to this song in Micah 7 further bolsters its importance as an image of the lawlessness and perversion of the population. There are allusions to the Song of the Vineyard in other texts as well, many of which are considered seventh century or later (cf. Jer 2:21; Pss 80:7; Isa 27:1–3).

The prophet Micah compares the great city of Samaria to an uncultivated vineyard, littered with large stones. This is not the picture that comes to mind when a vineyard is envisioned. A vineyard is usually pictured as a piece of land, cultivated with vines and carefully tended fruit. Micah utilizes an uncommon depiction of a vineyard to predict the complete destruction of a major city. In this way, the prophet turned a symbol of prestige and abundance into a curse against the people.

TABLE 5 *Vine imagery in Micah*

1:6	Therefore I will make Samaria a heap in the open country, a place for planting vineyards. I will pour down her stones into the valley, and uncover her foundations.
2:1	They shall sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees, and no one shall make them afraid.
6:15	You shall sow, but not reap; you shall tread olives, but not anoint yourselves with oil; you shall tread grapes, but not drink wine.
7:1–4	Woe is me! For I have become like one, after the summer fruit has been gathered, after the vintage has been gleaned, finds no cluster to eat; there is no first-ripe fig for which I hunger. The faithful have disappeared from the land, and there is no one left who is upright; they all lie in wait for blood and they hunt each other with nets. Their hands are skilled to do evil; the official and the judge ask for a bribe, and the powerful dictate what they desire; thus they pervert justice. The best of them is like a brier, the most upright of them a thorn hedge. The day of their sentinels, of their punishment, has come; now their confusion is at hand.

4 Conclusion

Metaphors express cultural understandings and so the best metaphors are the ones that speak lucidly to their audience. Isaiah of Jerusalem, Amos, Hosea, and Micah were all prophets who conveyed a message of condemnation and destruction, often accompanied by images of wine consumption or wine production as a symbol of this impending doom. Viticulture represented a thriving industry for trade as well as a symbol of prosperity and local culture. Therefore, curse imagery associated with viticulture would have resonated with the listeners. External threats such as drought or invasion were a reality of daily life, not to mention the fear of divine retribution. The prophets expanded upon these concerns, managing to create a vivid image of the peoples' failure to meet the divine's expectations.

The "figurative creativity" of the eighth century writing prophets is remarkable. We are all aware to some degree of the world we live in, and these men utilized their surroundings to develop culturally specific images.⁷⁷ Viticulture became a useful tool for depicting the frustration of the divine with the people

77 Kövecses, *Metaphor in Culture*, 253.

whom he had planted. Even though wine is often portrayed in a positive light in many passages in the Bible, in many of the oracles of Isaiah, Amos, Hosea, and Micah, wine becomes a symbol of excess and profiteering. The people themselves are likened to this excess through vine imagery and their fruit becomes the rotten stench of a failed harvest.

The Assyrian campaigns in the late eighth century disrupted wine production in the north for a period of time, but the southern province of Judah was able to maintain a thriving wine export until the Babylonian campaigns in the early sixth century B.C.E. The biblical text indicates that unlike the Assyrians, the Babylonians spared the vinedressers and tillers of the soil and left them in the land, while carrying the rest of the people off to captivity (2 Kgs 25:12). Does the material culture support this statement? Chapter seven will analyze what affect the Babylonian destruction and subsequent exile had on the booming wine trade as well as if these events altered the vine imagery prevalent in pre-exilic prophetic literature.

The ‘Pleasant Planting’: A Remnant of the People

The destruction of the northern kingdom in the late eighth century B.C.E. caused a mass influx of refugees into fortified cities in Judah. These migrators needed protection from

Assyrian siege warfare, which had destroyed most of the northern territory as well as large areas of the Judean foothills.¹ The population in and around the city of Jerusalem also increased substantially, which demanded an agricultural base to sustain the influx. Jerusalem became a central hub offering protection, a centralized government, a temple for worship, and a growing economy. Viticulture contributed to the economic viability of Jerusalem as well as nearby settlements within Judah.²

The recovery of hundreds of *lmk* jar handles dating to the time of King Hezekiah (c.a. 715–687 B.C.E.) suggest that the government either allocated certain fields for royal wine production or land owners were required to donate portions of their harvest to the state (see chapter 5, heading 2.2.2). Hezekiah was well aware of the strategies behind siege warfare, so he kept commodities stored in various locations across the territory. The government clearly had a vested interest in the lucrative wine trade, but they were not the only ones. Many of the wealthy citizens within the city also accumulated land for cash cropping. Just as the Samaritans were chastised for sequestering land from the rural farmers, the Jerusalemite landowners followed a similar pattern. Prophets such as Isaiah of Jerusalem and Jeremiah attempted to warn the leadership in

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- 1 See Israel Finkelstein and Nadav Na'aman, “The Judahite Shephelah in the Late 8th and Early 7th Centuries B.C.E.,” *TA* 31 (2004): 60–79. Also, Israel Finkelstein, “The Archaeology of the Days of Manasseh,” in *Scripture and Other Artifacts: Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Honor of Philip J. King* (ed. M.D. Coogan; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 169–187. According to Finkelstein, the foothills west of Jerusalem were significantly hit by Assyrian warfare, 173. However, Nadav Na'aman's recent article maintains that Jerusalem's population growth was not due to refugees fleeing the northern kingdom, but rather the city grew gradually from the ninth to the seventh centuries B.C.E. Nadav Na'aman, “When and How Did Jerusalem Become a Great City? The Rise of Jerusalem as Judah's Premier City in the Eighth-Seventh Centuries B.C.E.,” *BASOR* (2007): 21–56. Either way, the city had expanded by the eighth century and required certain resources to sustain the population.
 - 2 For a look at the growth of small farmsteads around Jerusalem in the eighth through sixth centuries see, David Amit, “Farmsteads in Northern Judaea (Betar Area), Survey,” *Explorations and Surveys in Israel* 10 (1991): 147–148.

particular, that if they did not change they would ensure a similar fate to the northern kingdom. These words were in vain. Between 597 B.C.E. and 581 B.C.E., the Babylonian armies ravaged Judah and eventually destroyed Jerusalem, exiling countless to Babylon.

The exile caused immeasurable damage to many fortified towns throughout Judah and severely crippled the agricultural sector.³ Viticulture was a visible source of enjoyment and revenue, growing alongside the surrounding hills of the territory. Since people are attuned to the world in which they live, Zoltán Kövecses would argue that, “differential social-cultural experiences and differential cognitive processes can lead to variation in metaphors.”⁴ Therefore, the disruption of something as visible as viticulture should noticeably alter metaphorical language as well.

This chapter seeks to explore how the Babylonian exile influenced the metaphor YHWH IS THE VINTNER OF ISRAEL. The century leading up to the exile was an era of economic surplus and rising literacy.⁵ Therefore, examining how a watershed event such as warfare affected the metaphorical mappings of the culture, should illustrate the correlation between environment and the development of conceptual metaphors. Prophets such as Ezekiel, who wrote in exile in Babylon, would not have had the same visual resources to draw from as Isaiah of Jerusalem. Interestingly, even though the image of the people as vines fades in the post-exilic biblical texts, plant imagery as a whole does not completely disappear. Instead, once the people are “uprooted” from the land, they are brought back as a “branch” and re-planted in a sacred garden. Thus, the returning remnant, depicted as the Garden of YHWH, replace the negative connotations of the people as a worthless vineyard.

1 The Exile’s Impact on the Vineyards

Gather and rescue us from among the nations.

1 Chr 16:35

3 See Avraham Faust, *Judah in the Neo-Babylonian Period: The Archaeology of Desolation* (SBLABS 18; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 1, for a list of archaeological surveys that attest to destruction layers in many cities, including Jerusalem, Lachish, Ramat Rahel, etc.

4 Kövecses, *Metaphor in Culture*, 293.

5 See Schniedewind, *How the Bible Became a Book*, 91–101.

The destruction of several towns in Judah by the Babylonians in the early sixth century and the subsequent exile of many of the inhabitants was a defining moment in the social history of the Jewish people. Fortress locations such as Lachish and Arad were burned to the ground and Jerusalem was destroyed by King Nebuchadnezzar's armies. Even though several biblical scholars have attempted to minimize the devastating impact of this event, the biblical literature and the archaeological evidence paint quite a different picture.⁶ According to demographic surveys, the population of Jerusalem shrunk from approximately 40,000 inhabitants in the sixth century B.C.E. to 1500 people in the fourth century B.C.E. The Babylonian armies either killed or displaced the inhabitants of the city. The number of settlements in Jerusalem declined by at least 89%, although directly after 586 B.C.E. the percentage was probably even greater.⁷ Those who fled and those who were exiled were displaced from their homes, their culture, and their history.

Much of the hype surrounding "the myth of the empty land" is primarily concerned with Jerusalem since it was the economic and cultic center of Judah. There have been multiple archaeological surveys conducted in Jerusalem and the surrounding area in the last few decades.⁸ These reports confirm that the city was in fact emptied of the majority of its inhabitants.⁹ But what about the other major towns in Judah? Did they share the same fate as Jerusalem? Why were some cities razed to the ground while others indicate continuity? Were agricultural exports such as wine and oil a factor in the Babylonian campaign strategy? These are some of the questions that this section seeks to unravel.

The well-known archaeologist, William Foxwell Albright, claimed that during Neo-Babylonian Judah (586–539 B.C.E.), "all, or virtually all, of the for-

6 Most notably, Charles Cutler Torrey, *Ezra Studies* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1910), 289. Also, Hans M. Barstad, *The Myth of the Empty Land: A Study in the History and Archaeology of Judah during the "Exilic" Period* (SO 28; Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1996), 18–19. Robert P. Carroll, "Israel, History of Post-Monarchic Period," *ABD* 3: 567–576. Avraham Faust's recent work is primarily concerned with re-evaluating the archaeology for the Neo-Babylonian period in order to show that the theory of continuity is unfounded. Faust, *Judah in the Neo-Babylonian Period*. For another comprehensive overview of all the arguments, see Oded Lipschits and Joseph Blenkinsopp, eds., *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003).

7 Oded Lipschits, "Demographic Changes in Judah Between the Seventh and Fifth Centuries B.C.E.," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period* (ed. O. Lipschits and J. Blenkinsopp; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 332–333.

8 *Ibid.*, 328, for a list of major excavations in Jerusalem over the last several decades.

9 See Oded Lipschits, "Judah, Jerusalem, and the Temple (586–539 B.C.)," *Transeu* 22 (2001): 132–134.

tified towns in Judah had been razed to the ground. There is not a single known case where a town of Judah was continuously occupied during the exilic period.”¹⁰ Subsequent scholars have also argued this same position, most recently Ephraim Stern. After surveying the destruction of numerous tel sites, he too concluded that, “all its cities lay in ruins by the end of the Babylonian period.”¹¹ These reports contradict the claims of Hans M. Barstad and Thomas Thompson who argue that only a few went into captivity and therefore the distinction between a pre-exilic and post-exilic Judah should not be taken seriously historically.¹² Granted, the literary and epigraphic evidence we have for this time period is meager, but this is why the archaeological surveys are so important for understanding the material culture.¹³ There is ample evidence of a destruction layer during the Neo-Babylonian period for the cities of Lachish in the west, Arad in the south, Jericho in the east, and Jerusalem in the center.¹⁴ However, there are many towns in the Benjamite territory (Transjordan) that were not destroyed, which may be why many Judeans fled to these places.

Bethel, Gibeah (Tel el-Fûl), Mizpah (Tell en-Nasbeh), Gibeon (El-Jîb), Mozah, and Anathoth are towns located in the Benjamite territory that show a continued settlement pattern even after the Babylonian campaigns.¹⁵ Interestingly, Gibeon and Mozah were known for wine production. James Pritchard’s excavations at Gibeon unearthed wine cellars, rock-cut wine presses, as well as wine storage jars from the Neo-Babylonian period.¹⁶ These remains suggest

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- 10 William F. Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine: From the Stone Age to Christianity* (Baltimore, Md.: Penguin Books, 1949), 142.
 - 11 Ephraim Stern, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible, Volume II: The Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian Periods (732–332 B.C.E.)* (ABRL 2; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 323.
 - 12 Barstad, *Myth of the Empty Land*, 42, 78. Thomas L. Thompson, *The Mythic Past: Biblical Archaeology and the Myth of Israel* (New York/London: Basic Books, 1999), 214.
 - 13 Even sixth century pottery is undistinguishable from late Iron Age pottery.
 - 14 There have been numerous studies published on the archaeological surveys of these cities. Cf. Eleanor K. Vogel, “Bibliography of Holy Land Sites,” *HUCA* 42 (1971): 1–96. Eleanor K. Vogel, “Bibliography of Holy Land Sites II,” *HUCA* 52 (1981): 1–92. Eleanor K. Vogel, “Bibliography of Holy Land Sites III,” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 58 (1987): 1–67. Faust surveyed the archaeological data from large sites. He argues that, “an early-sixth-century destruction layer (or at least abandonment) was found in practically all the excavated central sites, and the destruction was usually attributed to the Babylonians. Regardless of the agents of these destructions, the country was nevertheless devastated.” Faust, *Judah in the Neo-Babylonian Period*, 244.
 - 15 See Abraham Malamat, “The Last Wars of the Kingdom of Judah,” *JNES* 9 (1950): 226–227.
 - 16 James Pritchard produced one of the few archaeological studies devoted to wine production. He dated these jugs to the late Iron II period, but Carter and Wright argue for a

that large quantities of wine were manufactured in Gibeon. An elaborate water system was also uncovered, which supplied water from several springs to the ancient inhabitants as well as the agricultural fields. This site does show a level of continuity during the Neo-Babylonian period, possibly due to the survival of the agricultural infrastructure.

The biblical record cites Mizpah as the administrative center for the Babylonian appointed ruler, Gedaliah (2 Kgs 25: 22–23).¹⁷ Excavation surveys indicate that the town may have expanded during stratum II, which dates to the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods.¹⁸ Over sixty stamped jar handles (exilic or postexilic) were discovered here as well as seal impressions. Furthermore, biblical and Second Temple literature mentions this place as a cultic center even down to the Roman period (Judg 20:13; 1 Sam 7:5; Jer 41:4–6; 1 Macc 3:4).¹⁹ After the destruction of the temple, mourners from Shechem, Shiloh, and Samaria were sent to Mizpah instead of Jerusalem (Jer 41:5–7). Since Mizpah may have been the capital of Judah for over a century (from the time of Gedaliah until Nehemiah), these surveys bolster the assumption that the city was a government as well as a cultic location at this time.

Oded Lipschitz has done extensive research on the archaeological surveys in the settlements within Benjamin and Jerusalem. He concluded that, "the relative prosperity of this area must be attributed to the political centrality assigned to Mizpah and the economic importance of Gibeon and Mozah. The agricultural hinterland surrounded and based itself on these centers."²⁰ Even though the population in this region declined about 60%, it continued to function as an agricultural hub.²¹ Avraham Faust, however, argues that even if some refugees fled to the Benjamin region during the Babylonian siege, the archaeological surveys do not indicate that Mizpah or Gibeon flourished

Neo-Babylonian and perhaps early Persian period. Six inscribed jar handles were found at Gibeon. See James B. Pritchard, *Winery, Defenses and Surroundings at Gibeon* (Philadelphia: The University Museum, 1964), 19–21. Charles E. Carter, *The Emergence of Yehud in the Persian Period: A Social and Demographic Study* (JSOT 294; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press Ltd., 1999), 120–121.

17 The site was partially damaged at end of Iron II, but was not totally destroyed. See Carter, *Emergence of Yehud in the Persian Period*, 128.

18 Oded Lipschitz, "The History of the Benjamite Region under Babylonian Rule," *TA* 26 (1999): 178.

19 For more information about this cultic center, see Joseph Blenkinsopp, "The Judean Priesthood during the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid Periods: A Hypothetical Reconstruction," *CBQ* 60 (1998): 25–43.

20 Lipschitz, "Demographic Changes in Judah," 350.

21 *Ibid.*, 365.

during the Neo-Babylonian period. According to Faust, “while some of the sites might have existed during most of the sixth century, this is not clear for all of them. Even those which appear to have existed at the time were probably in decline.”²² Lipschits and Faust both agree that more surveys are needed to form a more complete picture of this area. The Benjamin region may not have witnessed the level of destruction as Jerusalem and its surrounding environs in the early sixth century, but the economic infrastructure was crippled by the Babylonian conquest. This led to a gradual decline of settlement in this area in the sixth century.

Furthermore, the Babylonians did not re-establish coastal ports such as Ashkelon and Ekron after assuming control over the area. Ashkelon was a wine-production center and Ekron was known for olive-oil production. Faust’s claim that Babylon was not interested in Israel’s wine and oil surplus deserves some merit.²³ Either Nebuchadnezzar received his wine from closer ports to home or he was not interested in many of the viticulture “hotspots” in Judah and along the coast. Regardless of the exact reasoning, wine production continued in some places, such as Gibeon. Horticulture remained the mainstay of those who remained in the land even though many of the larger farmsteads were destroyed.

The biblical literature also highlights that agriculture as well as viticulture remained the predominant economical backbone of the region. In three separate locations the text specifies that Nebuzaradan, the captain of the Babylonian guard gave the poor of the land (the vinedressers and tillers of the soil) vineyards and fields to labor (Jer 39:10; 52:16; 2 Kgs 25:12). Cultivated land was vital to the sustenance of the population, and may or may not have been important to the Babylonian Empire. The biblical text indicates that the poor were given land as well as vineyards and the archaeological picture confirms that agriculture remained the primary livelihood of the people after the exile. Wine production in Judah was diminished to a fraction of its former size in the sixth century, but there are some indications that it was produced in a few locations. The landscape was drastically altered by the siege and the economic and social recovery was a slow process. These circumstances altered the conceptual metaphoric expressions as well.

Joseph Blenkinsopp provides a balanced assessment of the archaeological picture as well as the biblical portrayal of the exilic events:

22 Faust, *Judah in the Neo-Babylonian Period*, 216.

23 Ibid., 190–193.

The Babylonian punitive expedition of 588–596 certainly caused significant loss of life, destruction of property, temporary interruption of economic activities and considerable ecological degradation, as had previous military incursions, but the destruction was neither indiscriminate nor total.²⁴

Jerusalem and its immediate surroundings were razed to the ground by the Babylonian army. But there is evidence to support, “the *continued existence* of a considerable Israelite material culture, particularly in the area of Benjamin, but also in the Judean Hills.”²⁵ Thus, the region of Benjamin provides a unique glimpse of one of the few economically viable locations within Judah during the Neo-Babylonian period. Archaeological surveys focused on agricultural production would be a valuable asset to gleaning a clearer picture of the economy at these pivotal junctions. Hopefully, there will be a greater emphasis on this aspect of the material culture in the future.

2 Traces of the Vine Imagery in Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Isaiah

The exile caused irrecoverable damage to many towns in Judah and the surrounding areas. The Jerusalem temple, the center for cultic activity, was also in ruins. The historical and psychological memory of the siege and its aftermath are illuminated in many exilic texts such as Lamentations and Ezekiel. Daniel Smith Christopher argues that, “the metaphor of imprisonment and references to places of imprisonment do not grow more plentiful during the exilic period by pure chance, especially in view of its foreignness to the Israelite judicial system.”²⁶ Metaphorical expressions reflect the worldview of their authors. In this way, literature becomes a channel for ideological understandings. Therefore, the analysis of imprisonment metaphors can be a useful tool for interpreting the physical, emotional, and psychological response to the exile in the sixth century.

24 Joseph Blenkinsopp, “The Bible, Archaeology and Politics; or The Empty Land Revisited,” *JSTOT* 27 (2002): 187.

25 Hans M. Barstad, “After the ‘Myth of the Empty Land’: Major Challenges in the Study of Neo-Babylonian Judah,” in *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period* (ed. O. Lipschits and J. Blenkinsopp; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 14.

26 Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology of Exile* (OBT; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 73.

The metaphorical expression of the people as plants was also affected by the traumas associated with the Babylonian siege and its aftermath. Chapter six analyzed the eighth century prophetic literature, which frequently depicted the people as a vine that produced sour grapes instead of the expected crop. Viticulture was a lucrative and highly visible economic industry in the late monarchic period. It also became a useful expression for the prophetic concerns with social injustice. The prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel, as well as later writings from the book of Isaiah illustrate how the Babylonian exile altered the metaphorical discourse as well. Images of the people as vines shift from a highly negative association in pre-exilic writings, to a positive re-interpretation in text such as Isaiah 27. Furthermore, vine imagery decreases substantially in the post-exilic literature, but planting imagery remains a consistent representation of the people.

2.1 *Jeremiah*

The Song of the Vineyard (Isa 5:1–7) expresses, by means of a horticultural metaphor, the one-sided failure of the relationship between the Israelite people and their deity (see chapter 6, heading 2). Many of the eighth century writing prophets adopted this image of Israel as a corrupted vine, the leadership chastised in particular (see chapter 6, heading 3). Even though wine drinking was a social marker associated with festivity, these prophets warned that the vintage harvest would become a time of mourning rather than feasting. The first few chapters of Jeremiah also perpetuate the association of viticulture with a corrupted people, incapable of producing the quality fruit that was expected.

Jeremiah is portrayed as one of the few known prophets who experienced the Babylonian destruction of Judah firsthand before fleeing to Egypt. These prophecies focus on the years leading up to the exile under King Josiah, as well as several years following the final deportations (ca. 627–587 B.C.E.).²⁷ Vine imagery in Jeremiah can be found in the first twelve chapters of the book, which are usually dated before the exile (see Table 6).²⁸ The vine(yard) imagery in these chapters is reminiscent of the eighth century prophetic material. Either the vine(yard) is portrayed as a waste, not producing the desired grapes or YHWH is envisioned as an angry grape treader, threatening to “glean” the peo-

27 For a detailed bibliography of the dating of the text see, Peter C. Craigie et al., eds., *Jeremiah 1–29* (WBC 26; Dallas: World Books, 1991), xlv.

28 There is a growing consensus that chapter 1–20 are pre-exilic teachings of Jeremiah. See, Lawrence Boadt, “Do Jeremiah and Ezekiel Share a Common View of the Exile?,” in *Uprooting and Planting: Essays on Jeremiah for Leslie Allen* (ed. J.E. Goldingay; Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 459; New York/London: T&T Clark, 2007), 20.

TABLE 6 *Vine imagery in Jeremiah*

Jer 2:2b–3	I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed me in the wilderness, in a land now sown. Israel was holy to YHWH, the first fruits of his harvest. All who ate of it were held guilty; disaster came upon them, says YHWH.
Jer 2:21	Yet I planted you as a choice vine , from the purest stock. How then did you turn degenerate and become a wild vine ?
Jer 5:10	Go up through her vine-rows and destroy, but do not make a full end; strip away her branches for they are not YHWH's. For the house of Israel and the house of Judah have been utterly faithless to me, says YHWH.
Jer 6:9	Thus says YHWH of Hosts: Glean thoroughly as a vine the remnant of Israel; like a grape-gatherer, pass your hand again over its branches.
Jer 8:13	When I wanted to gather them, says YHWH, there are no grapes on the vine , nor figs on the fig tree; even the leaves are withered, and what I gave them has passed away from them.
Jer 11:17	YHWH of Hosts, who planted you , has pronounced evil against you, because of the evil that the house of Israel and the house of Judah have done, provoking me to anger by making offerings to Baal.
Jer 12:2	You plant them, and they take root; they grow and bring forth fruit ; you are near in their mouth yet far from their hearts.
Jer 12:10	My shepherds have destroyed my vineyard , they have trampled down my portion, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness.

ple.²⁹ The remainder of the work does not associate the people with viticulture, but rather with trees or plants. Most of the vineyards surrounding Jerusalem were destroyed in 586 B.C.E., so it is noteworthy that viticulture imagery is predominantly found in the pre-exilic portions of the book.

The second chapter of the book of Jeremiah is framed by viticulture imagery. According to the oracle, at the birth of the nation, Israel was “the first fruits” of YHWH’s harvest, set apart and holy.³⁰ The relationship started off well, but

29 According to Ackroyd, “the linking of absolute judgment with warning and exhortation to repentance is a common characteristic of much of the first part of the book.” Peter R. Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration: A Study of Hebrew Thought of the Sixth Century B.C.* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968), 52.

30 The people are referred to as YHWH’s “first fruits” in this text. There are several passages in the Hebrew Bible that command the people to give the “first fruits” of their harvest to YHWH. Cf. Exod 23:19; 34:26; Lev 23:10; Deut 18:4; 26:2, 10; Prov 3:9; Neh 10:37; 1 Chr 31:5.

quickly the vintner became disappointed with the vintage. Jeremiah 2:21 conjures several images from the Song of the Vineyard, the element of disappointment in particular: planted by YHWH (נטע), a choice vine (שרק), became a wild vine (הגפן נכריה).³¹ Jeremiah 8:13, 11:17, and 12:2 also show affiliations with the Song of the Vineyard, as the corruption of the people is represented as worthless fruit. The “shepherds” are named as the people responsible for destroying YHWH’s vineyard in Jer 12:10. In the Song of the Vineyard, YHWH maintains that he will destroy the vineyard himself, but the blame is placed on the ruling elite (Isa 5:8). Jeremiah 12:10 is an especially poignant passage because the text conveys YHWH’s suffering, not just his wrath. Craigie argues that, “this divine lament portrays God as also suffering because of evil, evil from the hand of his own people.”³² In many of the viticulture themed passages in the Hebrew Bible, YHWH’s disappointment and wrath are key components of the language. Jeremiah 12:10, however, portrays the deity’s deep loss and pain as well.

The references to viticulture in the oracles of Jeremiah echo the negative associations of viticulture found in the eighth century prophetic writings. Howard N. Wallace notes that, “the image of something life-giving and sweet can also allude to something sinful and ultimately deadly.”³³ The vine metaphor depicting the people as the fruit of YHWH’s unmet expectations, which could have been something so pleasant, instead fuels the image of the wrath of the divine as a vengeful treader and gleaner of destruction. Jeremiah 5:10 and 6:9 illustrate this portrait of YHWH as an angry deity, determined to destroy most of his vineyard.³⁴

Post-exilic texts also attest to this motif, but the destruction is described in the past rather than a prediction of disaster. For example, Lam 1:15 states, “YHWH has trodden as in a wine press the virgin daughter Judah.” The destruction of the vineyard ended the wine drinking and the vintage singing. Even though YHWH found the grapes in the vineyard worthless, the grapes were still trodden, representing the blood of the people.

The late Judean prophecies of Jeremiah depict vine gleaning and treading as a metaphor for the impending punishment of the Jerusalemites. Many of these passages are reminiscent of the Song of the Vineyard, illustrating a choice planting that generated worthless fruit. YHWH’s disappointment and anger is a

31 Pss 80:7–19 also contains imagery similar to Isaiah 5.

32 Craigie et al., *Jeremiah* 1–29, 185.

33 Howard N. Wallace, “Harvesting the Vineyard: The Development of Vineyard Imagery in the Hebrew Bible,” *BV* 226 (2004): 1.

34 YHWH is also imagined as the divine treader stained with peoples’ blood in Jer 48:32–35 and Isa 63:1–6, but Israel is not the subject of his wrath in these instances.

consistent theme in this material as well as his intent to destroy the vineyard. The vine imagery in Ezekiel, however, depicts the people as corrupted and worthless at their roots.

2.2 *Ezekiel*

The prophet Ezekiel was known as a maker of riddles (Ezek 20:49). He used figurative language such as allegory and metaphor to depict the failings of the people and the loss of the land. People are portrayed as vines only three times in the book, but in each instance the imagery is negative (See Table 7).³⁵ The other prophetic books also unfavorably depict the people as vines, but Ezekiel attacks the vines' very nature.

The representation of the nation of Israel in vine imagery in Ezekiel is highly pessimistic. For example, in Ezek 15:5 the vine is portrayed as useless from its inception. Whereas the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah depicted the people as a choice planting that eventually went astray, Ezekiel maintains that the vines' only use from the outset was fuel for the fire. Ezekiel 15:7 does specify, however, that even though YHWH will turn his face against the people and will make the land desolate, some will escape from the fire.

Ezekiel 17:5–10 is an excerpt from an elaborate parable about two eagles and two vines. The vines described here pertain to the last kings of the Davidic line: King Jehoiachin and Zedekiah and their eventual demise.³⁶ Unfortunately, the roots of these vines are weak and easily swayable. This parable is not describing the entire population as vines, but rather the two rulers are associated with vine imagery.

The city of Jerusalem is depicted as a vine in a fruitful vineyard along abundant water in Ezek 19:10–14. Imagery from Ezekiel 15 and 17 resonate in this text. For example, the flourishing plant was plucked up and consumed by fire (Ezek 15:7 and Ezek 19:14). Furthermore, the vines in Ezekiel 17 and 19 were planted near abundant water (Ezek 17:5 and 19:10). This lament is also reminiscent of the Song of the Vineyard (Isaiah 5). If the beginning of the Song of the Vineyard is comparable to a wedding dirge, then this lament is comparable to a funeral song. This is the song that would have been sung after YHWH had destroyed his vineyard. Ezekiel 19:10–14 is a poignant and descriptive passage about the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and its inhabitants.

35 The people are depicted as plants in other passages in the book of Ezekiel. This table depicts viticulture imagery in Ezekiel.

36 Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel, Interpretation Commentary* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1990), 80–82.

TABLE 7 *Vine imagery in Ezekiel*

Ezek 15:2–8	O mortal, how does the wood of the vine surpass all other wood-the vine branch that is among the trees of the forest? Is wood taken from to make anything? Does one take a peg from it on which to hang any object? It is put in the fire for fuel; when the fire has consumed both ends of it and the middle of it is charred, is it useful for anything? When it was whole it was used for nothing; how much less-when the fire has consumed it, and it is charred-can it ever be used for anything! Therefore thus says the Lord God: Like the wood of the vine among the trees of the forest, which I have given for fuel, so I will give up the inhabitants of Jerusalem. I will set my face against them; although they escape from the fire, the fire shall not consume them; and you shall know that I am YHWH, when I set my face against them. And I will make the land desolate, because they have acted faithlessly, says the Lord God.
Ezek 17:5–10	Then he took a seed from the land, placed it in fertile soil ; a plant by abundant waters, he set it like a willow twig. It sprouted and became a vine spreading out, but low; its branches turned toward him, its roots remained where it stood. So it became a vine ; it brought forth branches, put forth foliage. Then there was another great eagle, with great wings and much plumage. And see! This vine stretched out its roots toward him; it shot out its branches toward him, so that he might water it. From the bed where it was transplanted to good soil by abundant waters, so that it might produce branches and bear fruit and become a noble vine . Say: Thus says the Lord God: Will it prosper? Will he not pull up its roots, cause its fruit to rot and wither, its fresh sprouting leaves to fade? No strong arm or mighty army will be needed to pull it from its roots. When it is transplanted, will it thrive? When the east wind strikes it, will it not utterly wither, wither on the bed where it grew?
Ezek 19:10–14	Your mother was like a vine in a vineyard transplanted by the water, fruitful and full of branches from abundant water. Its strongest stem became a ruler's scepter; it towered aloft among the thick boughs; it stood out in its height with its mass of branches. But it was plucked up in a fury, cast down to the ground; the east wind dried it up; its fruit was stripped off, its strong stem was withered; the fire consumed it. Now it is transplanted in the wilderness , into a dry and thirsty land. And fire has gone out from its stem, has consumed its branches and fruit, so that there remains in it no strong stem, no scepter for ruling. This is a lamentation, and it is used as a lamentation.

Vine imagery in Ezekiel is reflective of the cultural climate of the early sixth century B.C.E. The destruction of Judah, but Jerusalem in particular, impacted Ezekiel's writings. Just as Isaiah 5 predicted the demolition of the vineyard in graphic imagery, Ezekiel 19 chronicles and laments the outcome of its destruction. The loss of the monarchy, the loss of the city, and the loss of the temple, were all valid reasons to lament.

2.3 *Isaiah 27:1–6*

Isaiah 27:1–6 comprises a section of a larger work, the so-called Isaiah Apocalypse (Isaiah 24–27).³⁷ These chapters have been labeled “textually challenging,” yet there is agreement among scholars that this material assimilates older patterns into its contemporary outlook.³⁸ Canaanite mythical language is evident in the first verse.

Isaiah 27:1–6

1	ביום ההוא יפקד יהוה בחרבו הקשה והגדולה והחזקה על לויתן נחש ברח ועל לויתן נחש עקלתון והרג את־התנין אשר בים:
2	ביום ההוא כרם חמד ענולה:
3	אני יהוה נצרה לרגעים אשקנה פן יפקד עליה לילה ויום אצרנה:
4	חמה אין לי מי־יתנני שמיר שית במלחמה אפשעה בה אציתנה יחד:
5	או יחזק במעוזי יעשה שלום לי שלום יעשה־לי:
6	הבאים ישרש יעקב יציץ

37 Several monographs have been published on this material in the last few decades. Cf. James T. Hibbard, *Intertextuality in Isaiah 24–27: The Reuse and Evocation of Earlier Texts* (FAT 16; Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2006). Brian Doyle, *The Apocalypse of Isaiah Metaphorically Speaking: A Study of the Use, Function and Significance of Metaphors in Isaiah 24–27* (BETL 151; Leuven: Peeters, 2001). Donald C. Polaski, *Authorizing an End: The Isaiah Apocalypse and Intertextuality* (BIS 50; Leiden: Brill, 2000).

38 See Hibbard, *Intertextuality in Isaiah 24–27*, 2, for a list of scholarship. This text does not show all the features of the apocalyptic genre. A growing consensus suggests that the title “apocalypse” should be abandoned. See Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 346, for an analysis of what sections of this passage are apocalyptic in nature and which are not.

ופרח ישראל ומלאו פני-תבל
ומלאו פני-תבל תנובה: ס

- 1 On that day YHWH with his cruel and great and strong sword will
punish Leviathan
The fleeing serpent, and he will kill the dragon that is in the sea.
- 2 On that day:
A pleasant vineyard, sing about it:
- 3 I, YHWH, am its keeper; every moment I water it.
I guard it night and day so that no one can harm it.
- 4 I have no wrath.
If it gives me thorns and briers, I will march to battle against it.
I will burn it up.
- 5 Or else lit it cling to me for protection,
Let it make peace with me, let it make peace with me.
- 6 In the days to come, Jacob shall take root,
Israel shall blossom and put forth shoots,
And fill the whole world with fruit.

This hymn represents a merger of the divine combat motif with a radical reinterpretation of the Song of the Vineyard (Isa 5:1–7). In ancient thought, the powers of chaos were never completely at bay. Therefore, at periodic intervals, the deity had to battle primordial waters or creatures to bring order to the delicate ecosystem once again.³⁹ The creation of the world in Genesis 1 and the defeat of Yamm in Exodus 15 typify two of these moments. Isaiah 27, however, envisions a future battle in which YHWH will slay the Leviathan once and for all. According to Michael Fishbane:

Biblical versions link the prototypical conflict at the beginning of the world (*Urzeit*) with its recurrence within the sacred history of Israel during the exodus from Egypt, and its anticipated recurrence in new forms thereafter, up to and including the final defeat of the sea in the future (*Endzeit*).⁴⁰

39 See Jon D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (San Francisco, Calif.: Harper & Row Publishers, 1988), 3–50.

40 Fishbane, *Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking*, 63.

This mythical structure to time is not isolated to the earliest strands of biblical poetry, but is also visible in many Isaianic writings grappling with the exile and the destruction of the temple.

The mythopoetic elements characterizing YHWH as the divine warrior and storm-god is prominent in the book of Isaiah (cf. Isa 24:19–23; 27:1; 34:1–4, 8–10; 42:13–15; 50:2; 59:16–19).⁴¹ These images are usually drawn from the ancient hymns, but they are accompanied by prophecies of a new creation as well. Even though the redactors of biblical literature aimed to portray YHWH as different from his ancient Near Eastern counterparts, his repeated characterization as a warrior and storm-god argue to the contrary. This earliest portrait of YHWH was an anchor, a memory of a powerful deity that chose a group of people and planted them in a bountiful land.

The idea of a new creation in Isaiah 27 is further highlighted by the inclusion of an adaptation of the Song of the Vineyard within this material. Isaiah 5 recounts the creation and destruction of a beautiful vineyard. The song in Isaiah 27, however, stands in an “antithetical relationship” to the Song of the Vineyard.⁴² The vineyard is no longer an object of disdain, but rather a source of pride and hope: 1) YHWH is identified from the beginning as the keeper of the vineyard (v. 3). 2) Instead of withholding the rain (Isa 5:6b), he waters it constantly (v. 3). 3) His presence is there day and night, diligently guarding the vines (v. 3). 4) There is no need for a watchtower (מגדל) because YHWH himself is its protector. 4) Finally, the text specifies that YHWH feels no wrath (v. 4). In this song, the future of Israel is likened to a blossoming plant that will produce enough fruit to fill the entire world. The return of the divine to Israel will bring forth the slaying of the Leviathan, the planting of the people back in the land, and the land itself will also benefit from this renewal.

The divine treader as a destroyer and slayer of the people is not an image that this song wants to convey. Instead, divine protector and healer is the tone of the passage. All other ‘thorns and briers’ are warned to make peace with this vineyard or war will be waged against them (v. 4–5). The thorns and briers may refer to Israel or to foreign nations, but ultimately, YHWH desires a peace offering with the people.⁴³

41 Divine warrior/storm-god imagery also appears in Job 26:5–14; 38:1–4; Zech 9:14.

42 Edmond Jacob, “Du Premier Au Deuxième Chant de La Vigne Du Prophète Esaïe 27, 2–5,” in *Wort-Gebot-Glaube: Walter Eichrodt Zum 80. Geburtstag* (ed. H.J. Stoebe; Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1970), 325.

43 ‘Thorns and briers’ is the only terminology shared by the two passages (5:6 and 27:4). For echoes of Isaiah 5 in Isaiah 27, see Wallace, “Harvesting the Vineyard,” 4.

Isaiah 27 marks a distinct change in vine imagery portrayal, as the destruction of the Isaiah 5 vineyard was interpreted in conjunction with the destruction of Judah in 586 B.C.E. Even though there are not many references to viticulture in post-exilic texts, it is interesting that this passage attempts to reverse negative vine imagery that was so prevalent in the centuries leading up to the exile. As Kristen Nielsen notes, “it is an extension of the original vineyard song,” but it also represents a “change of rhythm.”⁴⁴ The original vineyard song ended with the threat of destruction and desolation. Therefore, the Song of the Vineyard was re-written to include the survivors of the destroyed vineyard. The restoration of the covenantal community is clearly present in Isaiah 27 as YHWH says he will have compassion on his ‘pleasant vineyard’ and promises that this vineyard will produce a harvest that will feed the entire world. This group will “return with singing” (Isa 51:11) and inhabit a new vineyard where YHWH is constantly present. The people’s hopeful future is represented as a fruitful and productive plant, rather than a worthless, bitter grape.

2.4 *Conclusion to Vine Imagery*

Vine imagery in the early oracles of Jeremiah reflect the cynical representation of the people as corrupted vines in eighth century prophetic literature. The Ezekiel vine passages illustrate deep loss, both the loss of rulership and homeland. Isaiah 27, however, offers a glimpse of a renewed and flourishing vineyard, which YHWH will plant once again. Here, a post-exilic text draws on earlier images (Isaiah 5), in order to re-interpret the people as vineyards for a new community. One of the motifs that arise out of the interpretative tradition is the contrasting of planting and up-rooting imagery. This is especially apparent in the book of Jeremiah and frames a large portion of the text.

3 Up-Rooting and Destroying versus Building and Planting

3.1 *Up-Rooting and Destroying*

The destruction of Jerusalem as well as other prominent Judean towns in the early sixth century altered the landscape of the land. Countless vineyards were destroyed, especially in the terraced hills surrounding Jerusalem. The prophecies of Judah’s destruction and doom were often likened to the destruction of a vineyard. The vineyard was a prized commodity providing fruit to eat and wine

44 Kristen Nielsen, *There Is Hope for a Tree: The Tree as Metaphor in Isaiah* (JSOTSup 65; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 117.

to drink, as well as a source of supplemental income. Uprooted and destroyed vineyards were not a part of the landscape of the late Judean monarchy. Instead, vast hillsides were lined with vines awaiting the harvest season.

Prophets such as Jeremiah and Ezekiel witnessed firsthand the destruction of the thriving wine industry in most parts of Judah. They were present when siege warfare led to the uprooting, destruction, and eventual burning of prized vineyards. Granted, the Babylonian army may have spared more vineyards than the Assyrian armies before them, but the archaeological evidence confirms that the agricultural sector was severely crippled by the Babylonian warfare. The book of Jeremiah, in particular, develops a specific planting motif: YHWH as the planter and builder as well as YHWH as the up-rooter and destroyer.⁴⁵ The prophecies pertaining to Judah's demise depict YHWH as the up-rooter and destroyer (see Table 8), whereas the prophecies pertaining to the restoration of Judah depict YHWH as the planter and builder (see Tables 9).

Jeremiah's call (Jer 1:10) is enshrouded in planting imagery. He is commanded to pluck up, to pull down, to destroy, and to overthrow as well as to build and to plant. YHWH specifies that he plucks up and destroys any nation that is deemed evil (Jer 18:7), and Judah is described as one of these nations in Jeremiah 12:14–15. If the nation turns from evil, however, he has the power to change the outcome (Jer 18:8). Just as the Judahites are depicted as a ravaged vineyard in Isaiah 5 and various places in the book of Jeremiah, so too the destructive nature of planting imagery is used to portray the removal of the people from the land.

Not only were the people uprooted because of divine fury, but the wildlife and landscape suffered as well. The contrast between divine favor and prosperity versus divine wrath and drought, further illustrates the ancient Israelite worldview (see Figure 9).⁴⁶ Human were thought to either bring order or disorder to the natural world, depending upon their actions as stipulated in the covenant. If the people followed the commandments, the land and people prospered, if they did not follow the commandments, drought and exile

45 Else K. Holt argues that, "these chain of verbs characterize the book of Jeremiah more than anything else." Holt, "Word of Jeremiah-Word of God: Structures of Authority in the Book of Jeremiah," in *Uprooting and Planting: Essays on Jeremiah for Leslie Allen* (ed. J.E. Goldingay; New York/London: T&T Clark, 2007), 177.

46 For example, the land was not able to yield produce after the murder of Abel (Gen 4:11–12) and after Saul murdered the Gibeonites there was a three-year famine (2 Sam 21:1–14). According to Moshe Weinfeld, "Desolation of the land (= dryness) is due to breaking the covenant," either shedding blood on the land or due to adultery, theft, taking a false oath, etc. See *The Promise of the Land: The Inheritance of the Land of Canaan by the Israelites* (Berkeley: University of CA Press, 1993), 191.

TABLE 8 *To pluck up/uproot (נָתַשׁ), pull down/break down (נָתַץ), to destroy (אַבַּד)*

Deut 29:28	YHWH uprooted them from their land in anger, fury, and great wrath, and cast them into another land, as is now the case.
Jer 1:10	See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms, to pluck up and to pull down , to destroy and to overthrow , to build and to plant .
Jer 12:14–15	Thus says YHWH concerning all my evil neighbors who touch the heritage that I have given my people Israel to inherit: I am about to pluck them up from their land, and I will pluck up the house of Judah from among them.
Jer 18:7–10	At one moment I may declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, but if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will change my mind about the disaster that I intended to bring on it. And at another moment I may declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it, but if it does evil in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will change my mind about the good that I had intended to do to it.
Jer 45:4	Thus says YHWH: I am going to break down what I have built , and pluck up what I have planted -that is, the whole land.
Pss 80:7–9, 12	Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved. You brought a vine out of the nations and planted it. You cleared the ground for it; it took deep root and filled the land. Why then have you broken down its walls, so that all who pass along the way pluck its fruit?

ensued. Deuteronomy 28:63 describes what will happen if the people fail to follow the covenants stipulated in the treaty formulae: “and just as YHWH took delight in making you prosperous and numerous, so YHWH will delight in bringing you to ruin and destruction; you shall be plucked off the land that you are entering to possess.”⁴⁷ Jeremiah pleaded with the people to change their ways using planting curse imagery from Deuteronomy, but eventually the uprooting took place (Deut 29:28 specifies the uprooting eventually happened).

47 For more information on curses and Deuteronomy 28 see Hans U. Steytmans, *Deuteronomium 28 Und Di Adê Zur Thronfolgeregelung Asarhaddons* (Universitätsverlag Freiberg Schweiz: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Göttingen, 1995). Also, Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 116–157.

The association of covenant breaking as tied deeply to the health of the land is not unique to biblical literature. For example, the Treaty of Sefire (eighth century B.C.E.) depicts an agreement between two rulers, the king of Katak and the king of Arpad. If the treaty were to be broken, the stipulations state that the land itself would be cursed: "for seven years may the locust devour (Arpad), and for seven years may the worms eat ... may the grass not come forth, so that no green may be seen."⁴⁸ Since agriculture was the mainstay of the economy, curse imagery against land production would have resonated strongly with the people. These treaty agreements illustrate the reciprocal relationship between maintaining treaty agreements and the health of the land.

The people's lack of concern for the covenantal treaty is stated over and over again in the prophetic literature as the reason for their 'uprooting' from the land.⁴⁹ Yet, this forced migration did not only affect the people. The land itself suffered because of the discretions of the people: "I looked on the earth, and lo, it was a waste and void ... I looked, and lo, the fruitful land was a desert, and all its cities were laid in ruins before YHWH, before his fierce anger (Jer 4:23a, 26)." Divine obedience led to prosperity and a fruitful land whereas divine disobedience led to waste and void, the status of the earth before YHWH planted the garden in Genesis 2.

3.2 *Building and Planting*

Just as YHWH had the ability to uproot and destroy, he had the capability to build and re-plant what had been damaged. The book of Jeremiah utilizes the 'uprooting' motif as a vivid warning of impending doom. Once the people are literally uprooted from the land, however, this imagery is reversed. The exiles are promised a new planting back in their land, where they will never be removed from again (see Table 9).

Re-planting the people in the land included a reversal of judgment and a promise of an "everlasting covenant." The land was desolate for a period of time, but now it is ready for a new planting. Just as the harvest cycle begins anew each year, the cycle of creation will begin once again. These oracles initiate a process that, according to Matthews, "designed to prepare for the creation of a new, cleansed world."⁵⁰ In Psalm 80, the psalmist repeatedly pleads with the divine to turn his face once again towards the vine, his people. In the new cleansed world, YHWH once again has his eyes set on the people because they now fear

48 Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire* (BibOr 19; Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1995), Stella I, lines 27–28, 14.

49 Cf. Isa 24:4 ff.; 38:8 ff.; Jer 23:10.

50 Matthews and Benjamin, *The Social World of Ancient Israel*, 204.

TABLE 9 *To plant (נטע) or (שתל) and to build (בנה), to sow (זרע)*

Amos 9:15	I will plant them upon their land, and they shall never again be plucked up out of the land that I have given them, says YHWH your God.
Jer 17:7–8	Blessed are those who trust in YHWH, who trust in YHWH. They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit .
Jer 24:5–7	Thus says YHWH, the God of Israel: Like these good figs, so I will regard as good the exiles from Judah, whom I have sent away from this place to the land of the Chaldeans. I will set my eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them back to this land. I will build them up , and not tear them down; I will plant them , and not pluck them up. I will give them a heart to know that I am YHWH; and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart.
Jer 31:27–28	The days are surely coming, says YHWH, when I will sow the house of Israel and house of Judah with the seed of humans and the seed of animals. And just as I have watched over them to pluck up and break down, to overthrow, destroy, and bring evil, so I will watch over them to build and to plant , says YHWH.
Jer 31:40	The whole valley of the dead bodies and the ashes, and all the fields as far as the Wadi Kidron, to the corner of the House Gate toward the east, shall be sacred to YHWH. It shall never again be uprooted or overthrown .
Jer 32:40–41	I will make an everlasting covenant with them, never to draw back from doing good to them; and I will put the fear of me in their hearts, so that they may not turn from me. I will rejoice in doing good to them, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul.
Jer 42:10	If you will only remain in this land, then I will build you up and not pull you down; I will plant you , and not pluck you up; for I am sorry for the disaster that I have brought upon you.
Ezek 36:36	Then the nations that are left all around you shall know that I, YHWH, have rebuilt the ruined places, and replanted that which was desolate; I, YHWH, have spoken, and I will do it.

him (Jer 24:7; 32:40). The future planting is assured divine favor and presence as well as a rebuilt homeland.

3.3 *Conclusion to Up-Rooting and Planting*

Planting imagery serves many functions in the Hebrew Bible. When plants are used to signify the people, the images can have both negative and positive connotations. Job Y. Jindo argues that, "the function of these plant images is usually understood to be illustrative or emotive, making the destruction scenes more vivid and engaging so as to appeal to the emotions of the audience."⁵¹ Both the destruction scenes and the restoration scenes appeal to the emotions of the audience. The books of Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel utilize metaphor reversals. The people are depicted as either worthless vines/plants in need of uprooting or lush vines/plants re-planted in a vineyard/garden oasis, carefully guarded by YHWH. In this way, planting metaphor reversal became one of the preoccupations of the prophetic writings after the exile.

Vine imagery is not as apparent in the post-exilic writings as the pre-exilic, in part because many agricultural areas in Judah were destroyed in 586 B.C.E. Wine continued to be manufactured in the Transjordan, but the use of viticulture as a metaphor would not have been as readily accessible in the local landscape in the decades following the exile. The book of Ezekiel utilizes very little vine imagery, aside from chapters fifteen, seventeen, and nineteen. The biblical texts that portray the returnees as plants do not often employ vine imagery. Instead, the people are compared to a branch/shoot in a divine garden.

4 Restoration Imagery

The metaphorical depiction of plants and trees representing the restored community resonates in several exilic passages in Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Zephaniah, Zechariah, and 1Chronicles (see Table 10). The surviving "remnant" is described in garden imagery and the Garden of Eden is evoked as a future description of the nation of Israel. Vine imagery is no longer present, except for one passage in Zechariah. Branches, rather than vines, depict the restored community and these branches are known for their abundant fruit. The one constant is that YHWH himself plants the people once again.

⁵¹ Jindo, *Biblical Metaphor Reconsidered*, 151.

TABLE 10 *A righteous branch (צֶמַח צְדִיק), remnant (שְׁאֵרִית), shoot (נֹצֵר), Garden of Eden (גֶּן־עֵדֶן), planting of YHWH (מִטֵּעַ יְהוָה)*

Jer 23:3, 5–6	Then I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the land where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. The days are surely coming, says YHWH, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch , and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel with live in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: ‘YHWH is our righteousness.’
Jer 33:15	In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.
Ezek 17:22–23	I myself will take a sprig from the lofty top of a cedar; I will set it out. I will break off a tender one from the topmost of its young twigs; I myself will plant it on a high and lofty mountain. On the mountain height of Israel I will plant it , in order that it may produce boughs and bear fruit, and become a noble cedar. Under it every kind of bird will live; in the shade of its branches will nest winged creatures of every kind.
Ezek 28:25–26a	When I gather the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered, and manifest my holiness in them in the sight of the nations, then they shall settle on their own soil that I gave to my servant Jacob. They shall live in safety in it, and shall build houses and plant vineyards.
Ezek 36:8	But you, O mountains of Israel, shall shoot out your branches, and yield your fruit to my people Israel; for they shall soon come home.
Ezek 36:35–36	This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden ; and the waste and desolate and ruined towns are now inhabited and fortified. Then the nations that are left all around you shall know that I, YHWH, have rebuilt the ruined places, and replanted that which was desolate; I, YHWH, have spoken, and I will do it.
Isa 4:2	On that day the branch of YHWH shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and glory of the survivors of Israel.
Isa 11:1	A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

Isa 37:31–32	The surviving remnant of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward; for from Jerusalem a remnant shall go out, and from Mount Zion a band of survivors. The zeal of YHWH of hosts will do this.
Isa 51:3	For YHWH will comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places, and will make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of YHWH ; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song.
Isa 58:11–12	YHWH will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden , like a spring of water, whose waters never fail. Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt ; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.
Isa 60:21	Your people shall all be righteous; they shall possess the land forever. They are the shoot that I planted , the work of my hands, so that I might be glorified.
Isa 61:3b–4	They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of YHWH , to display his glory. They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.
Zeph 3:13	The remnant of Israel; they shall do not wrong and utter no lies, nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouths. Then they will pasture and lie down, and no one shall make them afraid.
Zech 8:12	For there shall be a sowing of peace; the vine shall yield its fruit, the ground shall give its produce, and the skies shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things.
1 Chr 7:9	I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and I will plant them , so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall wear them down no more, as they did formerly.

There are several themes that emerge in restoration planting imagery. First of all, the two passages in Jeremiah depict a “righteous branch (צֶמַח צְדִיק),” one that will execute justice and righteousness in the land, possibly referring to a future Davidic king.⁵² Singing and dancing, weddings, and thank offerings

52 Jer 33:14–25 is absent from the LXX. The phrase “a righteous branch/shoot” depicts the

are mentioned in conjunction with a restored temple and a restored monarchy (Jer 33:11). Secondly, the Ezekiel passages emphasize that it is YHWH who is going to gather the people and re-plant them back in the land. Before this can happen, however, the land itself will transform from a desolate wasteland into a garden oasis like the Garden of Eden. The prophecies of Isaiah also draw on garden imagery, referring to Israel as: the garden of YHWH (51:3), a well watered garden (58:11), and the planting of YHWH (61:3). Furthermore, allusions to the Song of the Vineyard resonate in Zech 8:12. In contrast to the old vineyard, the new vineyard will produce abundant fruit, the sky will produce rain, and the remnant will possess this vineyard. Finally, 1Chr 7:9 states that the remnant will no longer be disturbed and Isa 60:21 maintains that they will possess the land forever.

There is a noticeable change in tone from exilic and post-exilic planting imagery compared to vine/plant imagery of the late monarchy. Instead of the vine representing disappointment and injustice, the plant/branch becomes a symbol of a devoted and righteous people. Garden imagery, but more specifically, divine garden imagery, becomes a positive metaphorical expression in restoration texts. Thus, planting imagery is able to remain a representation of the people without conjuring up the negative associations of the past.

Garden imagery functions as a symbol of hope, a “contrast world” to the current situation of the exiled population. T. Stordalen recently surveyed evidence of the Eden Garden narrative (Gen 2–3) in biblical literature.⁵³ One of the aims of this study is to demonstrate that there are a significant number of biblical texts that either mention Eden Garden or allude to the story. According to Stordalen, the primary location of these references occurred, “especially in prophetic and sapiential circles, at least from the Sixth Century B.C.E. From early Jewish literature it is clear that the topic remained popular for several centuries.”⁵⁴ Interestingly, divine planting imagery in this time period also utilizes

hope of a restored Davidic dynasty. According to Baldwin, this phrase is probably the Hebrew version of an ancient Near Eastern term meaning “legitimate scion.” Joyce G. Baldwin, “Semah as a Technical Term in the Prophets,” *VT* 16 (1964): 93–97.

53 The oral register in the language, its comparative features with ancient Near Eastern royal gardens, and its reception history in exilic prophetic literature, all attest to a pre-exilic or exilic date for Genesis 2–3. Peter Lanfer gives a detailed analysis of the evidence for an early date in Peter T. Lanfer, *Remembering Eden: The Reception History of Genesis 3:22–24* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2010), 10–12. Also see, Schniedewind, *How the Bible Became a Book*, 82.

54 Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden*, 452.

mythological motifs from early hymns, particularly those that portray YHWH as the storm-god/warrior and defeater of chaos.

Paul Hanson and Frank Moore Cross argue that myth is reintroduced in the sixth century in order to add a proto-apocalyptic dimension.⁵⁵ While I agree that mythic material is present in the post-exilic prophecy, I do not agree that this is a reintroduction. The characterization of YHWH as the storm-god warrior is a persistent theme in pre-exilic prophetic literature as well. The Song of the Vineyard and other eighth century prophetic texts attest to the consistent portrayal of the divine as a warrior and controller of the natural world, while at the same time, involved in the affairs of the people.⁵⁶ The early representation of YHWH as a planter and storm-god warrior in texts such as the Song of the Sea is ingrained into the framework of the biblical story. Therefore, the fusion of the combat myth with the interpretation of the restoration as a "new exodus" is aligned with a consistent representation of the divine in biblical literature.

Isaiah 51 is a quintessential example of a prophetic oracle drawing on motifs from early hymns to contrast the characterization of the people before and after the exile.⁵⁷ Ian Douglas Wilson articulately summarizes this text as a "rich site of memory, a dynamic blend of myth and metaphor that spoke to Judah's post-monarchic condition."⁵⁸ Divine conquest imagery, the justice and righteousness motif, the angry vintner, and eschatological themes are all integrated in this passage.

Isaiah 51:1–23

- | | |
|--|---|
| שמעו אלי רדפי צדק מבקשי יהוה הביטו אל-צור חצבתם ואל-מקבת בור נקרתם: | 1 |
| הביטו אל-אברהם אביכם ואל-שרה תחוללכם כי-אחד קראתיו ואברכהו וארבהו: ס | 2 |

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- 55 See Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic*, 25. Also, Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 166.
- 56 Hanson argues that the divine combat myths are absent from pre-exilic prophecy, but he does note that there are several psalms that display this imagery throughout biblical history: e.g., Pss 2: 1–11; 9: 6–13; 24:1–10; 29:3–11; 46: 2–12; 47: 2–10; 48:5–15; 65:6–13; 68:1–20; 76:4–13; 77:17–21; 89:6–19; 97:1–9; 104:1–35; 106:9–13; 110: 1–7. See Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic*, 303–310.
- 57 For a detailed bibliography of the affinities between Isaiah 51 and KTU 1.3 III 38–46, see Jeremy M. Hutton, "Isaiah 5:9–11 and the Rhetorical Appropriation and Subversion of Hostile Theologies," *JBL* 126 (2007): 285.
- 58 Ian Douglas Wilson, "The Song of the Sea and Isaiah: Exodus 15 in Post-Monarchic Prophetic Discourse," in *Thinking of Water in the Early Second Temple Period* (BZAW 461; ed. Ehud Ben Zvi and Christoph Levin. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 143.

- 3 כי־נחם יהוה ציון נחם כל־חרבתי וישם מדברה כעדן וערבתה כגן־יהוה ששון
ושמחה ימצא בה תודה וקול זמרה: ס
- 4 הקשיבו אלי עמי ולאומי אלי האזינו כי תורה מאתי תצא ומשפטי לאור עמים ארגיע:
5 קרוב צדקי יצא ישעי וזרעי עמים ישפטו אלי איים יקוו ואל־זרעי ייחלון:
6 שֹׂאוּ לשמים עיניכם והביטו אל־הארץ מתחת כי־שמים כעשן נמלחו והארץ
כבגד תבלה וישיבה כמו־כֶּן ימותון וישועתי לעולם תהיה וצדקתי לא תחת: ס
- 7 שמעו אלי ידעי צדק עם תורתי בלבם אל־תיראו חרפת אנוש ומגדפתם אל־תחתו:
8 כי כבגד יאכלם עש וכצמר יאכלם סס וצדקתי לעולם תהיה וישועתי לדור דורים: ס
- 9 עורי עורי לבש־יעז זרוע יהוה עורי כימי קדם דרות עולמים הלוא את־היא
המחצבת רהב מחוללת תנין:
10 הלוא את־היא המחברת ים מי תהום רבה השמה מעמק־יים דרך לעבר גאולים:
11 ופדוי יהוה ישוּבון ובאו ציון ברנה ושמחת עולם על־ראשם ששון ושמחה
ישיגון נסו יגון ואנחה: ס
- 12 אנכי אנכי הוא מנחמכם מִי־את ותיראי מאנוש ימות ומבֶּן־אדם חציר ינתן:
13 ותשכח יהוה עֶשׂךְ נוטה שמים ויסד ארץ ותפחד תמיד כל־היום מפני חמת
המציק כאשר כונן להשחית ואיה חמת המציק:
14 מהר צעה להפתח ולא־ימות לשחת ולא יחסר לחמו:
15 ואנכי יהוה אלהיך רגע הים ויהמו גליו יהוה צבאות שמו:
16 ואשים דברי בפיך ובצל ידי כסיתֶיךָ לנטע שמים וליסד ארץ ולאמר לציון
עמִי־אתה: ס
- 17 התעוררי התעוררי קומי ירושלם אשר שתית מיד יהוה את־כוס חמתו
את־קבעת כוס התרעלה שתית מצית:
18 איך־מנהל לה מכל־בנים ילדה ואין מחזיק בידה מכל־בנים גדלה:
19 שתים הנה קראתיך מי יגוד לך השד והשבר והרעב והחרב מי אנחמד:
20 בניך עלפו שכבו בראש כל־חוצות כתוא מכמר המלאים חמת־יהוה גערת אלהיך:
21 לכן שמע־נא זאת עניה ושכרת ולא מיין: ס
- 22 כה־אמר אדניך יהוה ואלהיך יריב עמו הנה לקחתי מידך את־כוס
התרעלה את־קבעת כוס חמתי לא־תוסיפי לשתותה עוד:
23 ושמתי ביד־מוגֶיךָ אשר־אמרו לנפֶשׁךָ שחי ונעברה ותשימי כארץ גֹּדֶךָ וכחֹץ
לעברים: ס

- 1 Listen to me, you that pursue righteousness, you that seek YHWH.
Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which
you were dug.
- 2 Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for he was but
one when I called him, but I blessed him and made him many.
- 3 For YHWH will comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places,
and will make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of
YHWH;
joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song.

- 4 Listen to me, my people, and give heed to me, my nation;
for a teaching will go out from me, and my justice for a light to the peoples.
- 5 I will bring near my deliverance swiftly, my salvation has gone out
and my arms will rule the peoples; the coastlands wait for me, and for my arm they hope.
- 6 Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath;
for the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment,
and those who live on it will die like gnats; but my salvation will be forever,
and my deliverance will never be ended.
- 7 Listen to me, you who know righteousness, you people who have my teaching
in your hearts; do not fear the reproach of others, and do not be dismayed
when they revile you.
- 8 For the moth will eat them up like a garment, and the worm will eat them
like wool;
but my deliverance will be forever, and my salvation to all generations.
- 9 Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of YHWH!
Awake, as in days of old, the generations of long ago!
Was it not you who cut Rahab in pieces, who pierced the dragon?
- 10 Was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep;
who made the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to cross over?
- 11 So the ransomed of YHWH shall return, and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.
- 12 I, I am he who comforts you; why then are you afraid of a mere mortal who
must die,
a human being who fades like grass?
- 13 You have forgotten YHWH, your Maker, who stretched out the heavens
and laid the foundations of the earth. You fear continually all day long
because of the fury of the oppressor, who is bent on destruction.
But where is the fury of the oppressor?
- 14 The oppressed shall speedily be released; they shall not die and go down to
the Pit,
nor shall they lack bread.
- 15 For I am YHWH your God, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar—
YHWH of hosts is his name.
- 16 I have put my words in your mouth, and hidden you in the shadow of my
hand,

- stretching out the heavens and laying the foundations of the earth,
and saying to Zion, "You are my people."
- 17 Rouse yourself, rouse yourself! Stand up, O Jerusalem,
you who have drunk at the hand of YHWH, the cup of his wrath,
who have drunk to the dregs the bowl of staggering.
- 18 There is no one to guide her among all the children she has borne;
there is no one to take her by the hand among all the children she has
brought up.
- 19 These two things have befallen you—who will grieve with you?—
devastation and destruction, famine and sword—who will comfort you?
- 20 Your children have fainted, they lie at the head of every street
like an antelope in a net; they are full of the wrath of YHWH,
the rebuke of your God.
- 21 Therefore hear this, you who are wounded, who are drunk, but not with
wine:
- 22 Thus says your Sovereign, YHWH, your God who pleads the cause of his
people:
See, I have taken from your hand the cup of staggering; you shall drink no
more
from the bowl of my wrath.
- 23 And I will put it into the hand of your tormentors, who have said to you,
"Bow down, that we may walk on you"; and you have made your back like
the ground
and like the street for them to walk on.

In an attempt to highlight the new attitude of the restored community as well as of YHWH himself, Isa 51:1–23 displays a myriad of themes gleaned from earlier prophetic literature. For example: 1) the eighth century prophets admonished the people for their lack of justice and righteousness (see chapter 6, heading 3). In Isa 51:1, however, the remnant is characterized as a people who pursue righteousness and carry the just teachings of YHWH on their hearts. 2) Angry YHWH is depicted as a grape treading, blood stomping deity in early prophetic literature (see chapter 6, heading 2.1.4). In Isa 51:17, 21, he affirms that they will no longer drink from the bowl of his wrath. 3) The Song of the Vineyard describes the planted people as a desert wasteland where no one lives. On the contrary, Isa 5:3 envisions the land as a new creation, the garden of YHWH, lush and filled with joy. 4) Isa 27:1 imagined a futuristic era when YHWH would come and defeat the Leviathan dragon once and for all. Isaiah 51:9, however, reminds the people that YHWH was the one who pierced the dragon and cut Rahab into pieces. 5) Finally, allusions to the Song of the Sea are meant to conjure the persona of YHWH as a divine warrior and storm-god (Isa 51:10).

Jeremy Hutton wrote an article on Isaiah 51 and the purposeful use of mythic material in post-exilic prophetic texts. He argues that the tension between myth and history is not as prevalent as was once assumed by scholars such as Paul Hanson. Instead, the prophet was aiming to convey an ideological purpose, namely that, "Yahweh's action is present in the everyday, the mundane, and the quotidian, in powerful and surprising ways."⁵⁹ By commanding Jerusalem 'to rouse itself' (v. 17) and reminding the people that YHWH's word is instilled in them (v. 16), the people are called to play an active part in the restoration process. The combat myth is conjured as an example of YHWH's great power and dominance, but the post-exilic community is also expected to exhibit changed behavior as well.

The divine warrior/storm-god imagery is evoked once again as a reminder of the great deeds of past, while images of an idyllic garden oasis become a symbol of the future habitation. In this way, restoration imagery provides a synthesis of Israel's mythological past while laying the groundwork for the apocalyptic features of future writings. According to Cross, Isaiah 51 is an excellent example of this new synthesis, "in which the old exodus is described in terms of the Creation myth and in turn becomes the archetype of a new exodus."⁶⁰ The new exodus also prominently features the people as a planting of YHWH and Zion is often cited as the location of the re-planting.

The movement from Yahweh as the planter of the nation of Israel to Yahweh as the planter of a remnant of righteousness that will possess the land forever, is an expression that many post-biblical authors drew on to legitimize their own worldview. The exile resulted in a loss of nationhood as well as a destroyed temple. Even though the temple was eventually rebuilt, the political and religious sectors did not resemble their former glory. The roots of apocalyptic eschatology emerged from this disillusioned and discontented context.⁶¹

59 Jeremy M. Hutton, "Isaiah 51:9–11 and the Rhetorical Appropriation and Subversion of Hostile Theologies," *JBL* 126, no. 2 (2007): 271–303.

60 Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 144.

61 According to Hanson, there are three primary factors that led to development of apocalyptic eschatology from earlier prophetic roots: "1) the self-identification of its protagonists with the classical prophetic tradition, 2) their following the lead of Second Isaiah in appropriating archaic league and royal mythopoeic material, but beginning to interpret it with a literalness which was carefully avoided by Second Isaiah, 3) a setting in a crisis-ridden post-exilic community struggling to adjust to the loss of nationhood and tremulous under a new threat to the unity of the community in the form of a growing schism between two factions, one visionary, the other hierocratic." Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic*, 9–10.

Isaiah 51 is considered an early example of an attempt to reconcile the past with the future. One of the characteristics of Jewish eschatology is that *Endzeit* is depicted as a return to *Urzeit*.⁶² The primeval beginnings, linked to a garden oasis, become the futuristic depictions of a 'righteous planting' in the remnant imagery. As the people returned to the land, the scriptures portray not only a gardener/vintner who is ready to resume care of his vineyard, but it is guaranteed to be a bountiful harvest.

5 Conclusion

The destruction of Judah in the early sixth century altered the physical landscape of the region. The once vibrant and lush hillsides, lined with vines, were torched and left desolate. Many of the exilic and post-exilic writings reflect the trauma of these events. The metaphor of YHWH as the vintner and the people as vines continues to be portrayed in an unfavorable light in the writings of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Isaiah 27, however, re-interprets this metaphor to reflect the future restoration of the people. The book of Jeremiah also utilizes planting imagery to convey YHWH's ability to plant as well as to uproot. The metaphorical expression of the people as plants is a theme in early biblical literature, yet it continues to evolve with the changing circumstances of the people. Although the image of the people as vines and YHWH as the vintner is typically negative, the re-emergence of planting imagery in the exilic literature portrays the remnant that returns, favorably.

Restoration imagery portrays an idyllic utopia where the human world and the natural world live in harmony. The people, who were once greedy and unjust, are depicted as walking in the ways of YHWH. Therefore, the ecosystem returns to a balanced state of equilibrium and the land flourishes.⁶³ A group of people, the remnant, then return and become the ideal plantation that they were destined to be in the first place. Isaiah 51 encapsulates these images fully as YHWH promises to comfort all the waste places so that they may become the garden of YHWH, full of joy and song.

In an era of uncertainty about the future restoration of the temple and the monarchy, divine garden imagery became a literary motif beginning in the sixth century. Postbiblical texts in the Second Temple period and the sectarian

62 Neil S. Fujita, "The Metaphor of Plant in Jewish Literature of the Intertestamental Period," *JSJ* 7 (2004): 33.

63 This is reflective of the ancient Israelite worldview (see Figure 9).

works at Qumran display this literary motif as well. In this way, divine planting imagery was continuously re-interpreted to represent the social, religious, and ideological concerns of the current generation.

PART 3

Pseudepigrapha and Qumranic References to the Divine as Planter/Vintner of the People



The Eternal Planting: A Garden Oasis

The present study on metaphor in the Hebrew Bible has demonstrated that metaphorical discourse is a reflection of the cultural milieu. Therefore, the study of specific metaphors in a culture at a particular time should reveal some of the pressing concerns of that group. Chapter seven surveyed the planting literature associated with the exile and its aftermath. The destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. forever changed Israel's political identity and caused a rift in the religious tradition as well. Even once the Jews returned to the land and the temple was rebuilt, the circumstances were not ideal. Martien Halvorson-Taylor's recent work on the metaphorization of exile argues that, "the exile signified not only forced migration and living in a foreign land under foreign domination, but also a variety of alienations: political disenfranchisement within Yehud, deep dissatisfaction with the status quo, and a feeling of separation from God."¹ The dissatisfaction with the political situation and certain aspects of temple worship underlie the social context of the religious literature of the late Second Temple period. These texts include biblical literature such as Chronicles and Daniel, the works of the Pseudepigrapha, and several sectarian writings from Qumran.

The gradual infiltration of Hellenism into the Eastern Mediterranean basin beginning in the fourth century B.C.E. threatened Jewish orthodoxy, as many Jews began to adopt Greek customs and thought. Hellenism brought new ideas, a polytheistic belief system, and a foreign language to an area that was secluded and not particularly interested in change. Over time, however, Greek thought permeated throughout every area of Jewish life, including temple worship. Extraction as well as re-interpretation of metaphorical mappings found within biblical literature is one of the ways that post-exilic Jewish groups articulated their worldview in this complex time. According to Bill Schniedewind, "in antiquity exegesis and interpretation were drawn especially to texts that were theologically or politically charged."² This is commonly referred to as "attraction." The divine as a planter for a chosen people is a set of images from biblical

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- 1 Martien A. Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile: The Metaphorization of Exile in the Hebrew Bible* (VTSup 141; Leiden: Brill, 2011), 1.
 - 2 William M. Schniedewind, "Inner-Biblical Exegesis," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books* (ed. B.T. Arnold and H.G.M. Williamson; The IVP Bible Dictionary Series; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 503.

literature that attracted interpretation to disillusioned writers in a subsequent era. Religious leaders, searching for answers to the changing environment and a shrinking religious sphere, adopted terms from biblical literature to instruct the people.

In this way, the planting metaphor apparent in several highly charged texts such as Exodus 15, Isaiah 5, and the plucking imagery from Jeremiah, were re-interpreted and applied to existent social concerns. These ideological assertions delineate a specific group as righteous and holy rather than the people as a whole. This pattern also largely follows the remnant imagery found in Jeremiah and third Isaiah, where only the righteous followers are depicted as a “shoot” or a “righteous branch” that the divine planted (see chapter 7, heading 4).³ Thus, the divine as planter of the people is no longer intended for all the Jewish people, but only for a particular sub-group. Certain works in the Pseudepigrapha as well as sectarian literature from Qumran highlight this separation and speak to the tendency at this time to narrow the planting metaphor significantly.

1 The Divine Planting Imagery in the Pseudepigrapha

The Pseudepigrapha provides a rich resource for the social, historical, and cultural concerns of early Judaism (ca. 250 B.C.E. to 200 C.E.).⁴ This literature was highly influenced by biblical material as unknown authors assumed, “under a false name,” the personae of famous biblical men such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, and Enoch. These authors anonymously expressed ideological concerns, often by recognizing biblical motifs and attributing these to their current situation. Without a Davidic king on the throne, the re-built temple’s status grew in importance. The priests emphasized the importance of ritual purity, in particular the separation of Jews from foreign wives and from foreign influences. Thus, the infiltration of Hellenism into the Eastern Mediterranean basin beginning in the fourth century B.C.E. threatened the existing religious traditions, as many Jews began to adopt Greek customs.

The references to planting imagery in the Pseudepigrapha largely follow the pattern established in the biblical literature, the post-exilic restoration imagery in particular. The people are depicted as a ‘righteous planting’ that will not be plucked up again, which is reminiscent of the uprooting/planting motif from

3 Cf. Jer 23:5; 33:15 and Isa 11:11; 60:21.

4 See James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (2 vols.; New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publ. Group, 1985), for a comprehensive listing and translation of the Pseudepigraphic material.

Jeremiah (see chapter 7, heading 3.1). Furthermore, these texts specify that the righteous planting only belong to a specific group of people, the holy ones (1 En. 62:8). These holy people are characteristic of the remnant of people described in Jeremiah and Isaiah, a righteous and just group (Jer 23:5–6; 33:15; Isa 60:21; 61:3b–4). They believed they were a new Israel, one in which the divine was actively guiding their steps (see Table 11).

TABLE 11⁵ *Pseudepigrapha*

1 En. 10:16–18	Destroy injustice from the face of the earth. And every iniquitous deed will end, and the plant of righteousness and truth will appear forever and he will plant joy. And then all the righteous ones will escape; and become the living ones until they multiply and become tens of hundreds; and all the days of their youth and the years of their retirement they will complete in peace. And in those days the whole earth will be worked in righteousness, all of her planted with trees, and will find blessing.
1 En. 10:19	And they shall plant pleasant trees upon her vines . And he who plants a vine upon her will produce wine for plentitude. And every seed that is sown on her, one measure will yield a thousand (measures) and one measure of olives will yield ten measures of presses of oil.
1 En. 62:8	The congregation of the holy ones shall be planted , and all the elect ones shall stand before him.
1 En. 84:6	Do not destroy, O my Lord, the flesh that has angered your from upon the earth, but sustain the flesh of righteousness and uprightness as a plant of eternal seed ; and hide not your face from the prayer of your servant, O Lord.
1 En. 93:2	Concerning the children of righteousness , concerning the elect ones of the world, and concerning the plant of truth , I will speak these things, my children, verily I, Enoch, myself, and let you know (about it) according to that which was revealed to me from the heavenly vision, that which I have learned from the words of the holy angels, and understood from the heavenly tablets.
1 En. 93:5	Then after that at the completion of the third week a (certain) man shall be elected as the plant of the righteous judgment , and after him one (other) shall emerge as the eternal plant of righteousness .

5 Translation taken from, Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*.

TABLE 11 *Pseudepigrapha* (cont.)

1 En. 93:10	At its completion, there shall be elected the elect ones of righteousness from the eternal plant of righteousness , to whom shall be given sevenfold instruction concerning all his flock.
2 Bar. 32:2–7	Zion will be shaken in order that it will be rebuilt. That building will not remain; but it will again be uprooted after some time and will remain desolate for a time. And after that it is necessary that it will be renewed in glory and that it will be perfected into eternity.
Jub. 1:15b–16	When they seek me with all their heart and with all their soul, I shall reveal them an abundance of peace in righteousness. And will all my heart and with all my soul I shall transplant them as a righteous plant .
Jub. 7:34	And now, my children, hear and do justice and righteousness so that you might be planted in righteousness on the surface of the whole earth, and your honor may be lifted up before my God who saved me from the water of the Flood.
Jub. 12:4	Worship the God of heaven, who sends down rain and dew upon the earth, and who makes everything by his word, and all life is in his presence.
Jub. 15:28	And you commanded the sons of Israel and let them keep this sign of the covenant for their generations for an eternal ordinance. And they will not be uprooted from the land.
Jub. 15:34	And great wrath from YHWH will be upon the sons of Israel because they have left his covenant and have turned aside from his words. They have made themselves gentiles to be removed and be uprooted from the land.
Jub. 16: 17b–18	But from the sons of Isaac one would become a holy seed and he would not be counted among the nations because he would become the portion of the Most High and all his seed would fall by lot into that which God will rule so that he might become a people belonging to YHWH, a special possession from all people, and so that he might become a kingdom of priests and a holy people.
Jub. 16:26	And he (Abraham) blessed his Creator who created him in his generation because by his will he created him for he knew and he perceived that from him there would be a righteous planting for eternal generations and a holy seed for him so that he might be like the one whom made everything.
Jub. 21:22	Be careful not to walk in their ways, and to tread in their path, or to commit a mortal sin before God Most High so that he will hide his

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- face from you, and deliver you into the power of your sin, and **uproot you** from the earth, and **your seed** from beneath the sky, and your name and **seed** will perish from all the earth.
- Jub. 21:24 And he will bless you in all your deeds, and he will raise up from you a **righteous plant** in all the earth throughout all the generations of the earth; and my name and your name shall not cease from beneath heaven forever.
- Jub. 36:6–7 (Isaac's farewell): Remember, my sons, YHWH, the God of Abraham, your father, so that he might multiply you and **increase your seed** like the stars of heaven with regard to number and so that he **will plant** you on the earth as a **righteous planting** which will **not be uprooted** for all the eternal generations.
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1.1 *Enoch*

The Book of Enoch, compiled over several centuries, is an important work for gleaning insight into Jewish thought in the late Persian and Early Greek periods.⁶ Parts of 1 Enoch are considered some of the earliest writing of the Pseudepigrapha, even as early as the third century B.C.E. (especially the *Astronomical Book*-chs. 72–82).⁷ 1 Enoch was used as a reference by several Pseudepigraphic works, Jubilees in particular, which attests to its significance for illuminating trends of thought in the late Second Temple period. It has long been recognized that one of the major themes of the book is the final judgment where the righteous and the wicked will either be rewarded or condemned for their behavior. According to the text, at this eschatological judgment all of the sin on the earth will end and in its place a “plant of righteousness” will appear. This plant will be eternal and will spark a planting of numerous trees and vines, all of which will be filled with blessing. Table 12 highlights the passages in Enoch, which describe a certain group of people as “plant of righteousness” or a “plant of eternal seed.”

6 James C. VanderKam, “Biblical Interpretation in 1 Enoch and Jubilees,” in *The Pseudepigrapha and Early Biblical Interpretation* (ed. James H. Charlesworth and Craig A. Evans. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 98.

7 The dating of the *Astronomical Book* is based on paleographical evidence from Aramaic fragments found at Qumran. See James C. VanderKam, *The Pseudepigrapha and Early Biblical Interpretation*, ed. James H. Charlesworth and Craig A. Evans, *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha: Supplemental Series 14* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993).

TABLE 12 *Enoch*

1 En. 10:16–18	Destroy injustice from the face of the earth. And every iniquitous deed will end, and the plant of righteousness and truth will appear forever and he will plant joy. And then all the righteous ones will escape; and become the living ones until they multiply and become tens of hundreds; and all the days of their youth and the years of their retirement they will complete in peace. And in those days the whole earth will be worked in righteousness, all of her planted with trees, and will find blessing.
1 En. 10:19	And they shall plant pleasant trees upon her-vines. And he who plants a vine upon her will produce wine for plentitude. And every seed that is sown on her, one measure will yield a thousand (measures) and one measure of olives will yield ten measures of presses of oil.
1 En. 62:8	The congregation of the holy ones shall be planted , and all the elect ones shall stand before him.
1 En. 84:6	Do not destroy, O my Lord, the flesh that has angered your from upon the earth, but sustain the flesh of righteousness and uprightness as a plant of eternal seed ; and hide not your face from the prayer of your servant, O Lord.
1 En. 93:2	Concerning the children of righteousness , concerning the elect ones of the world, and concerning the plant of truth , I will speak these things, my children, verily I, Enoch, myself, and let you know (about it) according to that which was revealed to me from the heavenly vision, that which I have learned from the words of the holy angels, and understood from the heavenly tablets.
1 En. 93:5	Then after that at the completion of the third week a (certain) man shall be elected as the plant of the righteous judgment , and after him one (other) shall emerge as the eternal plant of righteousness .
1 En. 93:10	At its completion, there shall be elected the elect ones of righteousness from the eternal plant of righteousness , to whom shall be given sevenfold instruction concerning all his flock.

The religious oppression initiated by the Seleucid rulers and the foreign influences upon the population created a dichotomy between the adherents to temple life and those who desired to embrace aspects of Greek life. Thus, the social injustices associated with the priestly ruling class in the prophetic literature became attached to both the political oppressors and the Jewish supporters

of Hellenism in the Enoch story. According to Charlesworth, “one of the central emphases of 1 Enoch is that sinners are economic exploiters, the political oppressors, and the socially unjust people of this world.”⁸ This particular world-view encouraged the development of eschatological thinking and a separation of the people into either “righteous” or “evil.” The two passages in 1 Enoch that deal with the righteous planting imagine a futuristic place of peace and prosperity. This utopia is free from war and depicts an abundance of plant life, including vineyards.

1 Enoch 10 is part of the *Book of Watchers* (chs. 1–36), which describes a time of judgment for the wicked and their ultimate doom in juxtaposition to the reward of the righteous. The final judgment is associated with Noah and the flood (vs. 2–4). Just as Noah’s “seed” was saved from the deluge, the righteous planting will be saved from the evils of the earth. From this one seed of righteousness, the faithful will multiply and their growth will blossom into a peaceful world (vs. 16–18). In this new earth, there will be vineyards producing exorbitant amounts of choice wine and oil trees yielding copious amounts of oil (v. 19). The righteous planting is an eternal planting, which will never be uprooted or destroyed. In contrast to the present situation of impending doom, these verses look to a future era, a garden oasis of blessing and prosperity.

1 Enoch 93:1–10 is from the *Apocalypse of Weeks* (91:12–17; 93:1–10) and is dated to the early pre-Maccabean era. Enoch is the speaker in this apocalyptic text and he is describing the chain of events that will occur before the plant of righteousness emerges. It is interesting to note that these verses describe a futuristic man (singular) as the “plant of righteous judgment” (v. 5). Furthermore, a second man is called the “eternal plant of righteousness” (v. 5). The eternal man is the one who will elect those who are considered righteous because this person will be knowledgeable of all the people. Enoch states that he learned about the plant of righteousness and the eternal plant of righteousness from the “Heavenly tablets” (v. 2). Furthermore, he describes the course of events that need to occur in order for these two characters to finally emerge. In an era of uncertainty and oppression, this passage envisions a future very different from the present circumstances. The evil in the world will come to an end and the plant of righteousness will initiate a new creation where all the plants of the world live in harmony and prosperity.

The planting imagery in 1 Enoch is reminiscent of the significantly narrowed representation of a remnant of people as the righteous plants found in parts of Jeremiah and third Isaiah. According to this interpretation, not all people

8 Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 9.

will participate in the divine plantation and only certain people are given the insight necessary to determine this distinction. However, the description of a specific “man” as the eternal planting of righteousness is an emerging thread of this particular metaphorical mapping. The book of Jubilees and sectarian literature from Qumran also interact with this developing thread of a particular “man” distinguished as a chosen plant. In this way, writers from a diverse landscape drew on the planting metaphor depicted in the Hebrew Bible and re-contextualized certain aspects to fit their social environment.

1.2 *Jubilees*

The book of Jubilees is a conformable re-telling of the biblical account from Creation to Sinai (Genesis 1–Exodus 12) dated to the mid-second century B.C.E. Like the book of Enoch, Jubilees illuminates the social crisis of the Jewish community around the time of the Maccabean Revolt. According to Endres, this work can be attributed to a scribe living in Palestine who was alarmed by, “the course of hellenistic assimilation, especially among the Zadokite priests ...; and the disastrous effects which he foresaw prompted him to write a work of instruction and exhortation for his Jewish brothers and sisters.”⁹ The Eschatological judgment, creation theology, proper adherence to covenant rituals, and the image of the faithful community as plant, are all prominent themes in the text. The planting imagery highlights a certain “holy seed” that “seek the LORD with all their heart” (Jub. 1:15b–16; 16:17b–18). These are the people who are designated to be transplanted into a garden oasis, a new Eden (see Table 13).

Even though Jubilees is a revelation received by Moses on Mt. Sinai, the patriarchs and their descendants comprise the main characters in the text. Surprisingly, the main character in Jubilees is not Abraham or even Isaac, but rather Jacob.¹⁰ Endres argues that, “Jacob stands at the very center of the covenant, and represents the election of Israel; his task was to establish Israel’s distinctiveness from the Gentiles.”¹¹ Some of Abraham and Isaac’s children took foreign wives, which polluted their lineage. Jacob’s sons were also involved with foreign women, but somehow Jubilees still maintains his superiority as the one

9 John C. Endres, *Biblical Interpretation in the Book of Jubilees* (CBQMS 18; Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association, 1987), 249.

10 See Endres, *Biblical Interpretation in the Book of Jubilees*, 18–19, for a detailed discussion of the prominence of Jacob in the book of Jubilees. It has been argued that Chronicles supports this view of Jacob as superior to Abraham as well. H.G.M. Williamson, *Israel in the Book of Chronicles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1977). Also, see Sara Japhet, “Conquest and Settlement in Chronicles,” *JBL* (1979), 217.

11 Endes, *Biblical Interpretation in the Book of Jubilees*, 229.

TABLE 13 *Jubilees*

Jub. 1:15b–16	When they seek me with all their heart and with all their soul, I shall reveal them an abundance of peace in righteousness. And will all my heart and with all my soul I shall transplant them as a righteous plant .
Jub. 7:34	And now, my children, hear and do justice and righteousness so that you might be planted in righteousness on the surface of the whole earth, and your honor may be lifted up before my God who saved me from the water of the Flood.
Jub. 12:4	Worship the God of heaven, who sends down rain and dew upon the earth, and who makes everything by his word, and all life is in his presence.
Jub. 15:28	And you commanded the sons of Israel and let them keep this sign of the covenant for their generations for an eternal ordinance. And they will not be uprooted from the land.
Jub. 15:34	And great wrath from YHWH will be upon the sons of Israel because they have left his covenant and have turned aside from his words. They have made themselves gentiles to be removed and be uprooted from the land.
Jub. 16:17b–18	But from the sons of Isaac one would become a holy seed and he would not be counted among the nations because he would become the portion of the Most High and all his seed would fall by lot into that which God will rule so that he might become a people belonging to YHWH, a special possession from all people, and so that he might become a kingdom of priests and a holy people.
Jub. 16:26	And he (Abraham) blessed his Creator who created him in his generation because by his will he created him for he knew and he perceived that from him there would be a righteous planting for eternal generations and a holy seed for him so that he might be like the one whom made everything.
Jub. 21:22	Be careful not to walk in their ways, and to tread in their path, or to commit a mortal sin before God Most High so that he will hide his face from you, and deliver you into the power of your sin, and uproot you from the earth, and your seed from beneath the sky, and your name and seed will perish from all the earth.
Jub. 21:24	And he will bless you in all your deeds, and he will raise up from you a righteous plant in all the earth throughout all the generations of the earth; and my name and your name shall not cease from beneath heaven forever.

TABLE 13 *Jubilees* (cont.)

Jub. 36:6–7	(Isaac's farewell): Remember, my sons, YHWH, the God of Abraham, your father, so that he might multiply you and increase your seed like the stars of heaven with regard to number and so that he will plant you on the earth as a righteous planting which will not be uprooted for all the eternal generations.
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chosen under his new name “Israel.” In *Jubilees* 22:17, Jacob is commanded by Abraham to “separate thyself from the nations.” The Jews living in the Maccabean era were torn between their traditions and the cultural temptations of Greek life. The writer of *Jubilees* expresses repeatedly the importance of separation from the gentiles as the core identification marker of the righteous. Since Israel was chosen from creation, an utter rejection of idolatry was considered the upmost priority of the devout (*Jub.* 23:23–25a; 32–33).

The strict distinction between those who keep the commandments versus those who ignore the covenant is highlighted in *Jubilees* 15, a text that mentions those who will be uprooted from the land. *Jubilees* 15:26a states that those who do not circumcise on the right day, “do not belong to the people of the pact which the Lord made with Abraham but to the people (meant for) destruction.” Many Jews at this time were not circumcising their sons because they wanted them to be able to participate in Greek games or because they did not want them to be marked as “different” than their peers. These are the people that the author of *Jubilees* is appealing to, who will be “uprooted from the land” and be called “sons of Belial.” In order to remain part of the righteous planting, a true follower was expected to walk in the path of strict obedience to the law or the divine would “hide his face from you, and deliver you into the power of your sin, and uproot you from the earth, and your seed from beneath the sky, and your name and seed will perish from all the earth” (*Jub.* 21:22). The importance of separating oneself from the surrounding culture is a re-occurring admonition in *Jubilees* and the people who do not follow these prescriptions are not considered members of the “eternal planting.”

The “eternal planting” imagery in the text is reminiscent of garden imagery in the Hebrew Bible, in particular the concept of a future Eden-like paradise for the righteous followers. *Jubilees* 3:19 promises the faithful a “pleasant land.” According to Stordalen, “Eden emerged as a conventional literary topic in biblical Hebrew literature—at least from the Early Persian Age onwards.”¹² The

¹² Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden*, 474. Peter Lanfer would argue that many of the references to

longing for a return to an Eden sanctuary coincides with the image of the divine planting theme in biblical literature. The people will once again be planted in a specific location, yet the temporality associated with the planting in many of the biblical texts, is absent. Instead, this new planting is a fixed structure and “will not be uprooted for all the eternal generations” (Jub. 36:7). Since the vine metaphor is predominantly portrayed negatively in the Hebrew Bible, this new planting is typically likened to a plant or tree rather than a vine.

The Book of Jubilees offers a glimpse into some of the social and theological concerns of the late Second Temple period. This work details the early history of the ancient Israelites, while simultaneously urging its contemporary readers to faithfully adhere to the commandments. Only those who practiced true obedience would be granted membership in the coveted planting.

1.3 *Comparison of Planting Imagery in Enoch and Jubilees*

Besides YHWH, there are only two other individuals who are labeled as “planters” in the Hebrew Bible: Noah and Abraham. Noah is depicted as “a man of the soil” and the first person to plant a vineyard in Gen 9:20. Furthermore, Abraham planted a tree in Gen 21:33 and called on God. This is noteworthy because the books of Enoch and Jubilees draw on these two individuals to develop their concept of planting as reflecting a specific group of people.

For example, in 1 Enoch 10:16, YHWH sends a messenger to warn Noah about the upcoming flood so that “he may save his life and escape for all time; and from a *plant shall be planted* and established for all generations forever.”¹³ Furthermore, the descendants of Noah are considered the righteous plant in 1 Enoch. In Jubilees 36:6, however, it is the descendants of Abraham whom God would plant in the earth as a ‘*righteous plants*.’¹⁴ Jubilees 1:16–17 also refers to a “righteous plant” and draws heavily from the imagery of Exodus 15:17: “I shall transplant them as a righteous plant ... And I shall build my sanctuary in their midst, and I shall dwell with them; I shall be their God and they will be my people, truly and rightly.” Thus, the lineage of the righteous planting stems from either Noah or Abraham and becomes a symbol of the true followers of YHWH.

In pre-exilic literature the people as a whole are depicted as YHWH’s planting. Post-exilic texts, however, delineate a remnant of people as the planting.

Eden in the biblical text, actually predate the exile. See Lanfer, *Remembering Eden: The Reception History of Genesis 3:22–24*, 35.

13 Quoted from Matthew Black, *The Book of Enoch or 1 Enoch* (SVTP; Leiden: Brill, 1985), 30.

14 J.C. VanderKam, “The Temple Scroll and the Book of Jubilees,” in *Temple Scroll Studies* (ed. G.J. Brooke; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 238.

According to Fujita, “both in First Enoch and Jubilees the rise of the righteous plant constitutes one of the most important component events in God’s plan of world history.”¹⁵ The seed of this plant becomes the heirs to a holy seed that will be planted in a garden oasis for eternity.

2 The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Holy Seed

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in the spring of 1947 unearthed a vast corpus of new material dated to the last few centuries of the Second Temple period. These scrolls provide a unique picture of a sectarian group, removed from popular society by choice, in protest to the corruption of the Temple Cult.¹⁶ Most of the “sectarian” literature found at Qumran is preoccupied with the interpretation of Scripture.¹⁷ The community was involved in a journey to reveal the “mysteries” hidden within Scripture.

These ancient biblical interpreters looked for common motifs and vocabulary to link concepts and ideologies together. The Qumran leaders and scholars believed that the authoritative source of interpretation was divine revelation to selected persons. According to 1QHab. 2:8–9, God gave understanding to interpret the prophetic word to the Priest (Teacher of Righteousness). This kind of inspired interpretation is never called ‘prophecy’ at Qumran and the teacher is never called a ‘prophet.’¹⁸ Armin Lange calls this phenomenon, “divinatory hermeneutics.”¹⁹ Another appropriate name for this idea that interpretation is

15 Fujita, “The Metaphor of Plant in Jewish Literature of the Intertestamental Period,” 34.

16 For a detailed account of the various scrolls found at Qumran and their ideology, there are a number of anthologies. See James C. VanderKam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2010). Lawrence H. Schiffman, *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls: The History of Judaism, the Background of Christianity, the Lost Library at Qumran* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1994). These two works provide an introduction to the discoveries, as well as pertinent information regarding the last fifty years of research on the scrolls.

17 For an analysis of which compositions are considered “sectarian” at Qumran, see Carol A. Newsom, “‘Sectually Explicit’ Literature from Qumran,” in *The Hebrew Bible and Its Interpreters* (ed. W.H.C. Propp et al.; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 167–187.

18 This should not be confused with later Rabbinic notions of interpretation. The Rabbis believed themselves to have the full authority to interpret the Torah. The community at Qumran, however, claimed that only a few selected people were given the ability to interpret scripture. See Paul Heger, “Qumran Exegesis: ‘Rewritten Torah’ or Interpretation?,” *RevQ* 85, no. 22 (2005): 81.

19 Armin Lange, “Interpretation als Offenbarung zum Verhältnis von Schriftauslegung und

given by divine illumination is *peshet*.²⁰ Therefore, these exegetes were aware of the various biblical and extra-biblical traditions surrounding the idea of YHWH as the divine planter and they customized this metaphorization into their writings.

The sectarian community as the “righteous people of God” and therefore the “eternal planting” became a symbol for the group itself and reveal facets of their ideology. After studying the eternal planting motif in the sectarian literature from Qumran literature, Patrick Tiller observed that this metaphor is “significantly narrowed to apply only to the community itself or its immediate predecessors.”²¹ Their need to justify living out in the desert as protest against the current Temple led them to draw on restoration planting imagery to legitimize their particular worldview.

TABLE 14²² *Dead Sea Scrolls*

1QS 8:5–7a	The Community council shall be founded on truth, to be an everlasting plantation , a holy house for Israel and the foundation of the holy of holies for Aaron, true witnesses for the judgment and chosen by the will of God to atone for the land to render the wicked their retribution.
1QS 11:8	He unites their assembly to the sons of the heavens in order (to form) the council of the Community and a foundation of the building of holiness to be an everlasting plantation throughout all future ages.

Offenbarung im apokalyptischer und nichapokalyptischer Literatur,” in *Wisdom and Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the Biblical Tradition* (ed. F. García Martínez; BETL 186; Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 19.

20 According to *peshet*, there is a mystery communicated by God to the prophet, but the communication remains sealed until its *peshet* is made known by God to his chosen interpreter. See Frederick F. Bruce, *Exegesis in the Qumran Texts* (London: Tyndale Press, 1959), 8.

21 Patrick A. Tiller, “The ‘Eternal Planting’ in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” *DSD* 4 (1997): 313. Tiller wrote a detailed article on planting imagery in the Pseudepigrapha and Dead Sea Scrolls, which is highly recommended for further reading.

22 Translation taken from García Martínez and Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*. I am only including the sectarian references to planting imagery. Copies of works, such as Jubilees or Enoch were found at Qumran. Since these works were already analyzed, I am not including duplicates in the Dead Sea Scroll section (i.e., 4Q204 col. v: 7; 4Q212 col. Iv: 12; 4Q221/4QJub 7).

TABLE 14 *Dead Sea Scrolls (cont.)*

4Q266	And at the period of wrath, he visited them and caused to sprout from Israel and from Aaron a shoot of the planting , in order to possess his land and to become fat with the good things of the soil.
1QFestival Prayers Frags, 1 + 2 (4Q508 1)	For you console us from our distress, and you gather together the exiles for the time and our scattered ones you assemble for the age of your mercies upon the assembly, like drops upon the earth in seed time, like rain upon the plants in the time of grass.
1QH ^a 6 (14): 15	Their root will sprout like a flower of the field forever, to make a shoot grow in branches of the everlasting plantation so that it covers all the world with its shade, and its crown reaches up to the skies, and its roots down to the abyss. All the streams of Eden will water its branches and they will be seas without limits.
1QH ^a 8 (16): 1–16	I give thanks to You, O YHWH, for You set me by at the source of streams in a dry land, and at the spring of water in a parched land, in a garden watered by channels ... a plantation of cypresses and elms, together with cedar. Trees of life in the secret source, hidden among all the trees at the water, which shall make a shoot grow in the everlasting plantation ... The shoot of holiness grows up into a planting of truth , hidden and not esteemed. And because it is not known its secret is sealed up. (vacat) But You, my God, You protect its fruit with the mystery of powerful warriors, holy spirits ... But You, O my God, have placed Your words in my mouth, as showers of early rain, for all who thirst and as a spring of living waters.
4Q415 4QInstruction Frag. 1 Col II: 2	For when he walks perfectly in all your instructions. Then eternal, and your holy seed will not or not shall your seed be removed from the holy inheritance of ... and you will rejoice in your children.
4Q418 Frag. 81: 12b–13a	And everyone who is called by his name (will be) holy. During all times his splendor, his beauty for the eternal plantation ... world. In it will walk all who inherit the earth.
4Q433a 4QHodayot-like Frag. 2	For the instructor for the glory of a delightful plantation he has planted in his garden and in his vineyard , his garden-beds and its branches will bear fruit and multiply its sprouts with support up to the heights of heaven, and branches for eternal generations, and to produce foliage and its leaves and its shoots will be in it, without brambles and thistles its roots will not be pulled up from his bed of spices ...

4Q475	And there will be no more guilty deeds on the earth and not ...
4QRenewed Earth	destroyer, and every adversary; and all the world will be like Eden , and all ... the earth will be at peace forever.
4Q500 Frag. 1:1–7	May your mulberry trees blossom and ... your winepress , built of stone ... at the gate of the holy height ... your plantation and your glorious channels ... your delicious branches ...

The planting imagery in the sectarian literature at Qumran parallels the Pseudepigrapha literature in vocabulary and content (see Table 14). This imagery is particularly similar to the writings of Jubilees. For example, many of the phrases are identical: a righteous plant, a holy seed, eternal generations, seed of Abraham, imagery of dew and rain, etc. Fragmentary copies of fourteen manuscripts of Jubilees were found at Qumran. Jubilees displays an interest in the last times, at time in which God will restore those who repent and transport them to a new earth. The planting imagery in both Jubilees and the Dead Sea Scroll's corpus reveal a futuristic utopia-like garden where the righteous and just dwell.

2.1 *The Community Rule and the Damascus Document*

The Community Rule and The Damascus Document are two of the main sectarian texts that discuss the laws and prescriptions of those living at Qumran. According to the final verses of the Damascus Document, this work is “the explanation of the laws to be followed during the entire period of visitation” (CD 11:18). The people in this community are described as a “shoot of the planting” whose roots originated with Israel and Aaron. The insistence in both the Damascus Document and the Community Rule that they are descendents of Aaron, the first High Priest, supports the hypothesis that this group had priestly ties to Jerusalem. The community, envisioned as a righteous plant, is depicted as close to God and a holy house. The expressions “a holy house for Israel” and “building of holiness” in 1QS 8:5 and 1QS 11:8 may indicate that the group believed that as a divine planting, they represented the temple itself. What is certain, however, is they considered themselves a planting that would never be uprooted, a planting for generations to come.

TABLE 15 *Community Rule and Damascus Document*

1QS 8:5–7a	The Community council shall be founded on truth, to be an everlasting plantation , a holy house for Israel and the foundation of the holy of holies for Aaron, true witnesses for the judgment and chosen by the will of God to atone for the land to render the wicked their retribution.
1QS 11:8	He unites their assembly to the sons of the heavens in order (to form) the council of the Community and a foundation of the building of holiness to be an everlasting plantation throughout all future ages.
CD 1:5–8a	And at the period of wrath, three hundred and ninety years after having delivered them up into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, he visited them and caused to sprout from Israel and from Aaron a shoot of the planting , in order to possess his land and to become fat with the good things of the soil.

2.2 *Hymn and Prayer Texts*

The planting imagery in the hymn and prayer texts found at Qumran depict a beautiful hidden garden near a vibrant spring. 1QH^a 14:15 indicates that this plant will be nourished by the rivers that flow from Eden. Given the emphasis in Second Temple literature on Eden imagery, this type of connection is not unfounded. 1QH^a 16 further narrows the eternal planting to a specific individual. As a “shoot of holiness,” this individual grows to become a tree that eventually covers the entire world. Even though the shoot is small and hidden at its inception (v. 6), it eventually feeds and shelters all animals (v. 8). The writer of this hymn professes that he has been given secret knowledge by God to share with others. He is a conduit of abundance for the Community, which will eventually grow to cosmic proportions.

The 4QHodayot-like hymn envisions the eternal planting as both a garden and a vineyard. Most of the metaphorical representations of the people as plants at Qumran depict garden imagery. This is the only known text that discusses the people as both a garden and vineyard. The vineyard in this text is a “delightful plantation” and does not contain any “sour grapes,” which is almost certainly a reference to Isa 5: 4. However, unlike the vineyard in Isaiah 5, this vineyard does not contain any “brambles and thistles” (Isa 27:4). Since much of the sectarian literature is preoccupied with interpretation of Scripture, mentioning “sour grapes” within a vineyard would conjure up specific images from biblical literature. In this way, the planting imagery so prevalent in

TABLE 16 *Hymns and prayer texts*

1QFestival Prayers Frags, 1 + 2 (4Q508 1)	For you console us from our distress, and you gather together the exiles for the time and our scattered ones you assemble for the age of your mercies upon the assembly, like drops upon the earth in seed time, like rain upon the plants in the time of grass.
1QH ^a 6 (14): 15	Their root will sprout like a flower of the field forever , to make a shoot grow in branches of the everlasting plantation so that it covers all the world with its shade, and its crown reaches up to the skies, and its roots down to the abyss. All the streams of Eden will water its branches and they will be seas without limits.
1QH ^a 8 (16): 1–16	I give thanks to You, O YHWH, for You set me by a fountain which flows in a dry land, a spring of water in a desolate land, a well watered garden. You planted a stand of juniper and pine together with cypress for Your glory; trees of life at the secret spring, hidden among all the trees by the water so that a shoot might grow up into an eternal planting ... The shoot of holiness grows up into a planting of truth , hidden and not esteemed. And because it is not known its secret is sealed up. (vacat) But You, O God, You protect its fruit with the mystery of powerful warriors, holy spirits, etc. But You, O my God, have placed Your words in my mouth, as showers of early rain, for all who thirst and as a spring of living waters.
4Q392 4QCommunal Confession Frag. 3:6b	You are YHWH, you have chosen our fathers long ago. May you raise us up to be their remnant , to give us what you established with Abraham, with Israel, and to drive out warriors of strength, and mighty in power, to give us houses full of all good things, wells of water, vineyards and olive trees from the inheritance of the people.
4Q433a 4QHodayot-like Frag. 2	For the instructor for the glory of a delightful plantation he has planted in his garden and in his vineyard , his garden-beds and its branches will bear fruit and multiply its sprouts with support up to the heights of heaven, and branches for eternal generations, and to produce fruit for all who taste it, and among its fruit there will be seen no sour grapes ... its foliage and its leaves and its shoots will be in it, without brambles and thistles its roots will not be pulled up from his bed of spices ...
4Q415 4QInstruction Frag. 1 Col 11: 2	For when he walks perfectly in all your instructions. Then eternal, and your holy seed will not or not shall your seed be removed from the holy inheritance of ... and you will rejoice in your children.

the Hebrew Bible, is re-used and re-interpreted for a community living hundreds of years later.

2.3 *Allusions to the Song of the Sea and the Song of the Vineyard*

There are a few texts within the Qumranic literature that evoke images from the Song of the Sea and the Song of the Vineyard, but do not specifically mention the divine as planter or the people as his planting. For example, 4Q500 is a blessing text that mentions a vineyard.

The text is fragmentary, but there are references to a wine-press, a delightful plant, and a holy height. Joseph Baumgarten argues based on rabbinic exegesis that the holy height may refer to the temple, since the temple mount itself became associated with the site of the 'righteous planting' in some literature of the Second Temple period.²³ He asserts that, "this fragment is a small but significant link in the continuity of the chain of biblical, apocryphal and aggadic traditions surrounding the Lord's vineyard which contained the Temple and recalled the fruitfulness of his primeval garden."²⁴ The Song of the Vineyard was already a source of interpretive conversation within the biblical writings, so its continued analysis highlights its importance in later traditions as well.

The Song of the Sea is another "highly charged" text that reveals a significant link of continuity between biblical and later Second Temple literature. A classic example of how the Song of the Sea exemplifies a long tradition of interpretation comes from 4QFlor 3:1–13. The column begins with a quotation of 2Sam 7:10, which is then interpreted through the secondary use of Exod 15:17–18. G.J. Brooke argues that this composition is, "concerned with the way various unfulfilled blessings and prophecies are being and will be fulfilled in the experiences of the community. Exodus 15:17 and 2Sam 7:10 are joined through their common use of 'to plant.'"²⁵ For the Qumran exegetes, the word "plant" formed a basis of association that they could then use to interpret events in their current context. Even though 4QFlorilegium does not actually quote "to plant" from Exod 15:17 or 2Sam 7:10, the author of the text knew this association and mentions these texts together. Since the Qumranic literature frequently

23 For instance, Tosefta Sukka 3:15 reads: "And he built a tower in its midst, this refers to the Hekhal; He dug a winepress in it, this refers to the altar; and he dug a winepress in it, this refers to the channel."

24 See Joseph Baumgarten, "4Q500 and the Ancient Conception of the Lord's Vineyard," *JJS* 40 (1989): 1–5, for a detailed discussion of this connection.

25 George J. Brooke, *Exegesis at Qumran: 4QFlorilegium in its Jewish Context* (JSOTSup 29; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), 298.

depicted themselves as YHWH's 'true planting,' references to Exod 15:17 and 2Sam 7:10 are to be expected.

The sectarian literature from Qumran highlights an ongoing tradition of religious poetry composition as well as a strikingly sophisticated hermeneutical practice. In their quest to formulate and express an ideology, the scrolls offer a glimpse into some of the social and religious concerns in the late Second Temple period. Their worldview is complex and is still being unraveled, but it is possible to formulate at least one snapshot of this worldview by looking at the metaphorical expressions they chose to emphasize.

3 Conclusion

The divine planting metaphor in the late Second Temple period predominantly drew on exilic and post-exilic references to the people as a "righteous planting" rather than a corrupted vine. Images of an Eden-like garden utopia are conjured to depict those who are planted by the divine. Furthermore, this metaphorical expression narrows significantly during this time period to encompass only those who are the true adherents to Jewish law and custom. The wicked are often contrasted with this "righteous planting," as they do not share in the benefits and blessings of the divine garden. Neil Fujita, who wrote a detailed analysis of the planting metaphor in this time period, argues that, "the metaphorical notion of the plant provides the Jewish authors of the intertestamental period with rich symbolism for their ideological assertions."²⁶ The spread of Greek culture, the increasing corruption related to the Jerusalem temple, and the development of various sects within the broader Jewish tradition, all contributed to the continued use of planting imagery during this time period. In a time of uncertainty and rapid change, the planting metaphor remained a concrete reminder of the consistent representation of the divine/human relationship throughout biblical literature.

²⁶ Fujita, "The Metaphor of Plant in Jewish Literature," 44.

Conclusion

1 Summary and Conclusions

The present study has argued that metaphor represents a dominant mode of biblical thought, particularly concerning the depiction of the divine/human relationship. Recent advances in conceptual metaphor theory and cognitive linguistics transformed the function of metaphor within literature and everyday speech. Metaphor began to be investigated for its cognitive capabilities, freeing the trope from a purely linguistic analysis. This has been especially helpful in analyzing ancient societies and their conceptual framework because metaphorical discourse illuminates the relationship between language, culture and cognition.

In the Hebrew Bible, metaphor is the primary method used for depicting the innate characteristics of YHWH. This is especially apparent in the early poetry. Since ancient Israel was an agrarian society, the deep connection to the land is also reflected in the choice of metaphorical expression. Metaphors drawn from the natural world highlight the presence of the divine within the ecological environment of ancient Israel. Even those few instances where the text depicts God communicating with people directly, the natural world is an active agent in the revelation. For example, theophoric elements emerge in storms, loud thunder, violent earthquakes, and a gentle breeze. Metaphors drawn from the natural world were also instrumental in depicting the development of ancient Israelite conception of divine favor versus divine wrath. The conceptual metaphor YHWH IS THE PLANTER OF THE PEOPLE chronicles the often tumultuous relationship between the divine and the people.

Using insights from comparative ancient Near Eastern evidence, this study analyzed the social context of the divine as planter. YHWH's association as a warrior/storm-god is reminiscent of third millennium storm-god imagery in Mesopotamia, which coincided with the spread of agriculture. Early Hebrew poems such as Psalm 29 and Exodus 15 illustrated that metaphor and mythical language depicting the divine was common in early biblical literature. YHWH is depicted as a warrior/storm-god in imagery comparable, but not identical to the Canaanite storm-god, Baal. Exodus 15:17 was highlighted as the core text for this study, since this is where the metaphor of YHWH as the planter of the people first appears in the biblical literature. Sumerian, Persian, and Ugaritic texts which feature the autochthonous origin of man were also discussed

in order to demonstrate that the gods “planting” people was not particular to ancient Israel. Even though the creation account in Genesis 2–3 depicts the first humans as the blend of a divine template and dirt from the earth, the nation of Israel is described metaphorically as a planting of YHWH. Thus, the Song of the Sea mimics the cosmogonic activities of the creation of the world, but at a national rather than a cosmic level.

Based on the iconographic and epigraphic evidence, the metaphor of the divine as planter should be considered a primary metaphor in ancient Near Eastern culture. The metaphorical mapping of the divine as vintner of the people, however, expresses a complex and highly localized discourse. Wine production requires a certain climate and topography. Israel’s favorable location welcomed viticulture and was a known feature of the area from the early Iron Age. Complex metaphors are important to cultural consideration because they testify to a culturally specific discussion. Beer was the drink of choice in the ancient Near East, yet the biblical literature largely ignores this fermented drink. Wine, on the other hand, is mentioned almost three hundred times. The archaeological picture of the late Iron Age in Israel and Judah also supports the conclusion that viticulture was a mainstay of the economy.

The analysis of the Gezer Calendar Inscription, the Samaria ostraca, as well as the survey of hundreds of *lmk* jar handles and simple treading installations also illustrate that viticulture was important part of the material culture in Iron Age Israel. The eighth century prophetic texts echo these findings. The oracles of Isaiah of Jerusalem, Amos, Hosea, and Micah are latent with viticulture imagery, in particular the association of wine production with the deteriorating morality in the land. The Song of the Vineyard provides the most complete metaphorical discourse on the association with YHWH as a vintner and the people as the vine(yard) in the literature. The people are portrayed as a choice planting in this text, tended by a careful vintner. The fruit of this vine, however, produced “stinking” and worthless grapes unfit for wine production. YHWH is described as the disappointed vintner in this song and he vows to not only withhold the rain from the vines, but to destroy the vineyard itself. This song illuminates the social grievances of the eighth century, namely the latifundialization of the land of local peasants by wealthy landowners. YHWH is an angry vintner in these texts and he is often likened to a grape treader, “treading” the people in his fury. Since viticulture was linked to social, economic and cultic spheres, this metaphor spoke to all levels of society.

The destruction of the majority of key settlements in Judah by the Babylonian army crippled the agriculture sector as well. Wine production centers such as Ashkelon and the terraced hills surrounding Jerusalem were burned to the ground. Although some scholars have argued that rural areas maintained

a level of continuity, the archaeological picture paints a different picture. The area of Benjamin may have been an administrative center in the early sixth century, but many of the settlements in this area gradually declined due to the economic and political stability in the region. Wine production is attested at Gibeon and some small farmsteads, but wine trade would have been minimal without the port of Ashkelon. Interestingly, the metaphor of people as vines drastically decreases in biblical literature at this time period as well. Since metaphor variation is expected when there is a change in geography, landscape, or dwelling, the decrease in vine imagery at this time follows natural patterns in metaphorical production. The “remnant” of people who return from exile are still depicted in horticulture imagery, but instead of vines, they are plants “replanted” in a divine garden. The emergence of proto-apocalyptic motifs, capitalize on early combat warrior and storm-god imagery from mythic material such as the Song of the Sea. Isaiah 27 and Isaiah 51 were analyzed as examples of the synthesis of Israel’s mythological past while simultaneously laying the groundwork for the apocalyptic features of future writings. In this way, the plant metaphor continued to be utilized in biblical literature as a depiction of YHWH’s chosen people, a “pleasant planting” on the mount of his inheritance.

Second Temple literature, including texts from the Pseudepigrapha and the Dead Sea Scrolls, drew from the planting motif to delineate those who would be qualified to participate in the “eternal planting.” The division line between the righteous and the wicked is a frequent motif in this time period, particularly due to the spread of Hellenism. Greek culture forced the temple cult to confront the acculturation of various ideas, some of which threatened Jewish orthodoxy. Thus, planting imagery in these texts often depicts a futuristic garden oasis, similar to Eden where the righteous will flourish for eternity.

In many ancient Near Eastern mythologies, metaphor was an intentional method of interpretation. These metaphors were chosen from experiences in everyday life, such as the natural landscape, the ecological environment, and warfare. The metaphor of YHWH as the planter of the people is rooted in a similar cultural milieu. Planting imagery remains a consistent portrayal of the Israelite people in the Hebrew Bible, although the association of the people with the vineyard is typically portrayed unfavorably in pre-exilic texts. The natural world was the conceptual model from which the metaphors for the divine/human relationship were gleaned. From these roots, the many-sided crystal by which the divine is depicted emerges in vibrant color.

2 **Directions for Future Research**

The development of ancient Israelite religion was complex and entailed mythical as well as historical components. The preoccupation with the “historical” aspects of the religion has highlighted defining moments, but has failed to recognize the importance of the natural world within its original social context. Any attempt to disassociate the natural world from the biblical literature contradicts the agrarian fabric that regulated ancient thought and behavior. We live in a world increasingly removed from food production, yet ecological concerns are prevalent today as well. Land care is an important theme in biblical literature and ultimately became a representation of the people themselves.

The Pseudepigrapha and the Dead Sea Scrolls attest to a highly sophisticated understanding of this metaphorical mapping, which was utilized for specific ideological purposes. This study did not analyze New Testament references to divine planting imagery, but there is much to be learned from this tradition as well. For instance, Jesus is referred to as “the true vine” in John 15:1 (see Appendix 3), replacing Israel as the vineyard. Furthermore, the Mishnah and Talmud contain information about horticulture as well as biblical interpretation on the significant passages associated with this study. Planting imagery remained a popular subject of discourse in biblical thought even after the canon took its final shape. The roots of divine planting imagery in the biblical text can possibly be attributed to a common cultural matrix, yet the particular variations within biblical and later Jewish and Christian literatures, reveal snapshots of thought at various points in history.

I hope this study can stimulate further investigation into the conceptual world of the ancient Near East. Metaphor can be a useful tool for analyzing culturally specific ideologies and concerns. The memory of foundational events as well as cultural particularities, are ingrained into the language. Metaphor theory, coupled with comparative textual analysis and the survey of material culture, can all work in tandem to advance our understanding of the complexities of ancient thought.

Snapshot of Divine Metaphors in Hebrew Poetry

1 The Song of Deborah (Judg 5:1–31)

4 יהוה בצאתך משעיר בצעדך משדה אדום ארץ רעשה גם שמים
נטפו גם עבים נטפו מים:
5 הרים נזלו מפני יהוה זה סיני מפני יהוה אלהי ישראל:

- 4 YHWH, when you went out from Seir, when you marched from the region of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens poured, the clouds indeed poured water.
- 5 The mountains quaked before YHWH, the One of Sinai, before YHWH, the God of Israel.
- Judg 5:4–5

The Song of Deborah describes a battle between Israel and Canaan at Taanach (by the waters of Megiddo). David Noel Freedman argues that this poem recounts a, “decisive episode in the struggle for control of the central and northern areas of Palestine.”¹ The Song of Deborah is considered a victory hymn for YHWH, the god who delivered Deborah and the tribes from Sisera’s armies and the kings allied with him. Just as in Exodus 15, YHWH is described as a storm-warrior. The god of ancient Israel marched into battle as a warrior and brought a storm that eventually led to the demise of the enemies. Patrick D. Miller analyzed this poem and he concluded that, “the Song of Deborah belongs to a context of covenant, tribal league, and holy war set against the mytho-theological concept of the divine warrior’s fighting with and for Israel.”² Much of the imagery of the divine warrior is very archaic and derives directly from Canaanite tradition.³ Divine power was manifested in the sudden flooding of the Kishon and the river disabled the Canaanite chariots.⁴ YHWH is pictured here as a warrior, storm-god, and deliverer of the people.

1 David N. Freedman, “Early Israelite History in the Light of Early Israelite Poetry,” in *Unity and Diversity: Essays in the History, Literature, and Religion of the Ancient Near East* (ed. H. Goedicke and J.J.M. Roberts; Baltimore/London: John Hopkins University Press, 1975), 12.

2 Miller, *Divine Warrior*, 87.

3 Korpel, *Rift in the Cloud*, 514.

4 Ibid., 18.

2 The Song of Moses (Deut 32:1–43)

כי לא כצורנו צורם ואיבינו פלילים: 31
 כִּי־מִגֶּפֶן סֹדֶם גִּפְנִים וּמִשְׁדַּמַּת עֲמֹרָה 32
 עֲנַבְמוּ עֲנַב־רוֹשׁ אֲשַׁכֵּלֶת מִרְרַת לָמוֹ:
 חֶמֶת תִּינֵם יֵינֶם וְרֹאשׁ פִּתְנִים אֲכֹזֶר: 33

- 31 Indeed their rock is not like our Rock; our enemies are fools.
 32 Their vine comes from the vinestock of Sodom, from the vineyards of Gomorrah;
 their grapes are grapes of poison, their clusters are bitter;
 33 their wine is the poison of serpents, the cruel venom of asps.
 Deut 32:31–33

The Song of Moses is an ancient hymn attributed to Moses just before his death on Mount Nebo.⁵ The song is usually classified as covenant law or wisdom literature, but it is also likely that this hymn originated in the context of liturgical worship.⁶ According to Matthew Thiessen, “three factors (shifts in person, changes of speaker, and imperatives/interrogatives) lead one to conclude that in the Song we have evidence of a liturgical work of Israel, it is best to compare the Song of Moses to liturgies of Scripture.”⁷ William L. Holladay also notes that this song “shares little with the legal and sermon material of Deuteronomy.”⁸ The archaic morphology and vocabulary attest to an early composition and its strategic placing right before Moses’s death, highlights its significance to the ancient Israelite community.

The Song of Moses is one of several early poems in which YHWH is referred to as “the Rock.”⁹ This is an interesting metaphor because typically God is depicted anthropomorphically in the biblical text.¹⁰ In the Old Testament this metaphor is used

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- 5 For an overview of scholarship on Deuteronomy 32 see, Paul Sanders, *The Provenance of Deuteronomy 32* (OTS 37; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 1–18.
 6 See, e.g., G. Ernest Wright, “The Lawsuit of God: A Form-Critical Study of Deuteronomy 32,” in *Israel’s Prophetic Heritage: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg* (ed. B.W. Anderson and W. Harrelson; New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962) 26–67. Also, J.A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy: An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC 5; Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1997) 296–297.
 7 Matthew Thiessen, “The Form and Function of the Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32:1–42),” *JBL* 123 (2004): 414–415.
 8 William L. Holladay, “Jeremiah and Moses: Further Observations,” *JBL* 85 (1966): 18.
 9 Cf. Gen 49:24; 1 Sam 2:2; 2 Sam 22:2, 3, 32; etc.
 10 Other impersonal metaphors for God taken from nature: God as ‘fire’, ‘rock’, ‘lion’, and ‘eagle’. See Kristen Nielsen, “Metaphors and Biblical Theology,” in *Metaphor in the Hebrew*

thirty-three times as a metaphor for God and once as a metaphor for gods (Deut 32:31).¹¹ The impersonal metaphor “YHWH is Rock” is reiterated four times in the Song of Moses (vs. 4, 15, 18, 31).

Vine imagery is also present in this song. The enemies of YHWH are portrayed as vines from the stock of Sodom and Gomorrah producing ‘poisonous grapes.’ Warrior YHWH vows to “make arrows drunk with blood” against those who hate him, a synthesis of viticulture imagery with divine warfare (v. 41–42). Vine imagery is often appropriated to the people of ancient Israel as well, which will be discussed in detail in the upcoming chapters. YHWH is also portrayed in this song as the creator (v. 6), the protector in the wilderness (v. 10), and an avenger (v. 24).

3 Habakkuk 3

8 הַבְּנֵה־רִים חָרָה יְהוָה אִם בְּנֵה־רִים אִפְךָ אִם־בַּיִם עֲבַרְתָּךְ
 כִּי תִרְכַּב עַל־סוּסֶיךָ מִרְכַּבְתִּיךָ יִשׁוּעָה:
 9 עָרִיָה תַעֲזֹר קֶשֶׁתְךָ שִׁבְעוֹת מָטוֹת אָמַר סֵלָה נִהְרוּת תִּבְקַע־אֶרֶץ:

- 8 Was your wrath against the rivers, O YHWH? Or your anger against the rivers, or your rage against the sea (Yamm), when you drove your horses, your chariots to victory?
- 9 You brandished your naked bow, sated were the arrows at your command.
 Hab 3:8–9

Habakkuk 3 is an ancient song that clearly describes YHWH as a storm-god warrior, similar to the Canaanite Baal.¹² For example, Baal is also described as a warrior with a spear of lightning who battled ‘Prince Sea’ and ‘Judge River.’¹³ This poem shares affinities with Deuteronomy 32 and Psalm 29 as well.¹⁴

Bible (ed. P. van Hecke; BETL 187; Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 264, for an interesting discussion on the rock metaphor for God. For a monograph on the rock metaphor, see, Kowalski’s Ph.D. diss., “Rock of Ages.”

11 Nielsen, “Metaphors and Biblical Theology,” 265.

12 See Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 156–157. In early poetry we see similar patterns and motifs: “the language of theophany in early Israel was primarily language drawn from the theophany of Baal.” See also, Green, *Storm God in the Ancient Near East*, 265.

13 RS 24.245. For further discussion on these terms, see Loren R. Fisher and F. Brent Knutson, “An Enthronement Ritual at Ugarit,” *JNES* 28 (1969): 157–167.

14 See Francis I. Andersen, *Habakkuk: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 25; New York/London: Doubleday, 2001), 300, for a comparison of similar vocabulary in Habakkuk 3 and Deuteronomy 32.

As is customary with much of biblical poetry, there is little consensus regarding the song's origin or exact *Sitz im Leben*.¹⁵ J.H. Eaton notes that readers are, "puzzled by the confusing mixture of Hebrew perfects and imperfects, the lack of historical data relating the theophany to its context, and above all the problem of tracing a meaningful sequence of thought throughout the psalm."¹⁶ What is apparent is that the language of Habakkuk 3 is saturated with mythological imagery. For example, the appearance of YHWH is compared to a sunrise and he is wearing the horned crown of the deity.¹⁷ YHWH is depicted as coming down from a mountain, causing violent earthquakes and plagues on earth, and ordering the collapse of "eternal" mountains. The earth itself is afraid of the divine warrior with his bow and chariot and the moon ceased from moving. The theophany closes with a first person affirmation of YHWH's strength and omnipotent power.

The aim of God's warfare in this poem is not clear, but its association with creation and the divine defeat of the watery chaos, often links this poem with the descriptions of YHWH in Psalm 29 and Exodus 15. In this song, the divine is likened to the sun (v. 4), he is the creator and commander of his creation (v. 3, 6), the defeater of the Yamm and River (v. 8), and the divine warrior (v. 8–15). The hymn echoes the battles of earlier days and recalls the extraordinary events of the exodus.¹⁸

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- 15 See Andersen, *Habakkuk*, 260, for a detailed list of scholarship on the composition of this text.
 - 16 J.H. Eaton, "The Origin and Meaning of Habakkuk 3," *ZAW* 76 (1964): 163.
 - 17 For an analysis on the comparison of the appearance of YHWH to the sunrise, see Theodore H. Gasler, "On Habakkuk 3:4," *JBL* 62, no. 4 (1943): 345–346. Also, see William F. Albright, "The Psalm of Habakkuk," in *Studies in Old Testament Prophecy: Presented to Prof. Theodore H. Robinson* (ed. H.H. Rowley; Edinburgh: Clark, 1950), 1–18, for this reading of *qarnayim*. Some also read it as "rays" since the previous verse is depicting YHWH as the Sun.
 - 18 Interestingly, the last few verses of this poem highlight viticulture: "Though the fig tree does not blossom, and no fruit is on the vines ... yet I will rejoice in YHWH" (Hab 3:17a, 18a).

The Cosmic Mountain

Mircea Eliade, after researching mythic illustrations from numerous world religions, concluded that mountains and trees were often a symbolic representation of the location where heaven and earth meet.¹ These locations became known as “the center of the world,” and were held in the highest regards by ancient societies. Richard J. Clifford wrote his doctoral dissertation on the cosmic mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament. He concluded that:

In the ancient civilizations from Egypt to India and beyond, the mountain can be a center of fertility, the primeval hillock of creation, the meeting place of the gods, the swelling place of the high god, the meeting place of heaven and earth, the monument effectively upholding the order of creation, the place where god meets man, a place of theophany.²

Since mountains are closer to the heavens, these locations were often revered as holy places.

In Egypt, almost all sanctuaries claimed to contain the site of the primeval hill, which had first emerged from the floods of Chaos.³ Mesopotamian temples were also linked to primordial beginnings. According to the *Enuma Elish*, the temple Esagila was built after Marduk defeated Tiamat and was known as the foundation of heaven and earth. This ‘cosmic center’ was considered a place where multiple spheres of the cosmos intersected. After surveying a number of ancient Mesopotamian and Canaanite texts, Clifford argues that mountains were, “set apart because of a divine presence or activity which relates to the world of man-ordering or stabilizing that world, acting upon it through natural forces, the point where the earth touches the divine sphere.”⁴ Therefore, it is hardly remarkable that most divine abodes in the ancient Near East were situated on mountaintops accompanied by lavish gardens.

Since the building of temples was a costly endeavor, the veneration of a particular deity with a temple signified their status within a particular community. Pauline

¹ See Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion* (trans. W.R. Trask; New York/London: Harcourt, Inc., 1957), 38, 53.

² Richard J. Clifford, *The Cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 5.

³ Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 113.

⁴ Clifford, *Cosmic Mountain*, 7–8.

Albenda observed that the, “studies of the physical remains of many cities in the region and the history of Mesopotamian gods from prehistoric through the Early Dynastic times have shown that each community had its own temple in which a particular god was worshiped.”⁵ For example, we know from the Ugaritic literature, that gods had their own plots of land.⁶ In the early sections of the Baal Cycle, Baal becomes upset because he was not given his own mountain to build a palace. El eventually gives Baal permission to build a home and he chooses Mt. Zaphon (Sapan) as his dwelling place.⁷

Come and I will reveal it
In the midst of my mountain,
Divine Sapan,
On the holy mount of my heritage,
On the beautiful hill of (my) might.⁸

The Baal Cycle describes Baal's palace in some detail and most of the architectural descriptions match those of a king's palace. However, there are some instances where the celestial nature of the temple is revealed. For instance, the text describes Baal's palace as eight stories high and consisting of “gold-edged clouds.” Baal's desire for a temple palace highlights the storm-god's struggle for supremacy in the Ugaritic pantheon.

There are many passages in the Hebrew Bible that also depict YHWH as a mountain god. For example, Mt.Sinai/Horeb, the place where the torah was given to Moses, is sometimes called ‘the mountain.’⁹ Exodus 15:17 describes YHWH's mountain as a place of his own creation and the exact location where he planted the nation of Israel. Frank Moore Cross (and many others) have argued for the striking similarities between the language in this verse and KTU 1.3 III: 28–31: “the mount of my heritage.”¹⁰ Just as Baal claimed Mt. Zaphon as his marked territory, YHWH is also depicted as having his own mountain sanctuary as well.

Some scholars have assumed that because this text refers to a specific mountain and sanctuary, that the writer must be aware of Mt. Zion and the Solomonic Temple. Yet, it was not uncommon to find sanctuaries commemorating ancient Near Eastern

5 Albenda, “Grapevines in Ashurbanipal's Garden,” 5–17.

6 See KTU 3.2.4.6.

7 KTU 1.4:V–VI.

8 KTU 1.3 III: 28–31. Translation taken from Mark S. Smith and Wayne T. Pitard, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle. Volume II. Introduction with Text, Translations and Commentary of KTU/CAT 1.3–1.4* (VTSup 114; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2009), 203.

9 Clifford, *Cosmic Mountain*, 108.

10 Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 142–143.

deities on mountaintops long before the Solomonic era.¹¹ Keel maintains that, in Mesopotamia, as in Egypt, “every temple has its *du-ku*, its ‘pure hill.’ The primeval hill substantiated the claim particular temples and cities to antedate all other holy places. The creator-god made his appearance on the primeval hill; the ordered world had its origins from it.”¹² Many prominent near eastern deities had sanctuaries on mountaintops. Exodus 15 refers to Yahweh’s mountain and sanctuary, the place where he planted the people.

The mountaintop sanctuary was not only a reflection of the cosmogony of a culture, but it also symbolized the supremacy of the deity over the forces of chaos. It was from these mountain sanctuaries that the storm-god orchestrated the agricultural cycle and according to some traditions, planted the people like the grass of the fields.

11 Clifford, *Cosmic Mountain*, 139–142, for an analysis of the possible locations for the mountain discussed in Exod 15:17.

12 Keel, *Symbolism in the Biblical World*, 113.

Miscellaneous Planting Texts from the Pseudepigrapha, Apocrypha, and New Testament

TABLE 17 *Miscellaneous planting texts from the Pseudepigrapha, Apocrypha and New Testament*

1 Esd 8:77–79	Because of our sins and the sins of our ancestors, we with our kindred and our kings and our priests were given over the kings of the earth, to the sword and exile and plundering, in shame until this day. And now in some measure mercy has come to us from you, O YHWH, to leave to us a root and a name in your place, and to uncover a light for us in the house of YHWH our God, and to give us food in the time of our servitude.
2 Esd 5:23–25, 27–28	I said, O Sovereign YHWH, from every forest of the earth and from all its trees you have chosen one vine , and from all the lands of the world you have chosen for yourself one region, and from all the flowers of the world you have chosen for yourself one lily, and from all the depths of the sea you have filled for yourself one river, and from all the cities that have been built you have consecrated Zion for yourself ... and from all the multitude of peoples you have gotten for yourself one people; and to this people, whom you have loved, you have given the law that is approved. And now, O YHWH, why have you handed the one over to the many, and dishonored the one root beyond the others, and scattered your only one among the many?
2 Esd 9:20–22	So I considered my world, and saw that it was lost. I saw that my earth was in peril because of the devices of those who had come into it. And I saw and spared some with great difficulty, and saved for myself one grape out of a cluster, and one plant out of a great forest.
Ode of Solomon 38:17	For I was established and lived and was saved, and my foundations were laid on account of the Lord's hand; because he planted me . For he set the root , and watered it and adapted it and blessed it , and its fruits will be forever. It penetrated deeply and sprang up and spread out , and it was full and was enlarged. And the Lord alone was praised, in his planting and in his cultivation ; in his

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- care and in the blessing of his lips, in the **beautiful planting of his right hand**; and in the attainment of **his planting**, and in the understanding of his mind.
- Ode of
Solomon 11
11:14–19 My eyes were enlightened and my face received **the dew**; and my breath was refreshed by the **pleasant fragrance** of the Lord. And he took me to his Paradise, wherein is the wealth of the Lord's pleasure. I contemplated **blooming and fruit-bearing trees**, and self-grown was their crown. Their **branches** were **flourishing** and their **fruits** were **shining**; their **roots** were from an immortal land. And a **river of gladness** was **irrigating** them, and the region round about them in the land of eternal life. Then I adored the Lord because of his magnificence. And I said, blessed, O Lord, are they who **are planted** in your land, and who have a place in your Paradise; and who **grow** in the growth of **your trees**, and have passed from darkness into light.
- Pss. Sol. 14:1–5 The Lord is faithful to those who truly love him, to those who endure his discipline, in the Law, which he has commanded for our life. The Lord's devout shall live by it forever; the **Lord's paradise**, the **trees of life**, are **his devout ones**. **Their planting is firmly rooted forever**; they **shall not be uprooted** as long as the heavens shall last, for **Israel is the portion and inheritance of God**.
- John 15:1–6 I am the **true vine**, and my Father is the **vinegrower**. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. **5 I am the vine, you are the branches**. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. **6** Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.
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